

946.08 S17t

Salter \$2.50
Try-out in Spain

A/c. No. 1097495	
1097495	AUG 2

946.08 S17t

Keep Your Card in This Pocket

Books will be issued only on presentation of proper library cards.

Unless labeled otherwise, books may be retained for two weeks. Borrowers finding books marked, defaced or mutilated are expected to report same at library desk; otherwise the last borrower will be held responsible for all imperfections discovered.

The card holder is responsible for all books drawn on this card.

Penalty for over-due books 2c a day plus cost of notices.

Lost cards and change of residence must be reported promptly.



Public Library
Kansas City, Mo.

Keep Your Card in This Pocket

REPRODUCED BY THE CITY OF KANSAS CITY, MO.

423

4152

~~SECRET~~

100-422

OCT-21-4

OCT 11 '42

SEP 15 '44

APD 23'45

SEP 12 '48

22

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

By Cedric Salter

AUTHOR OF

"Flight from Poland"



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK *and* LONDON

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

Copyright, 1943, by Cedric Salter

Printed in the United States of America

All rights in this book are reserved

*No part of the book may be reproduced in any
manner whatsoever without written permission ex-
cept in the case of brief quotations embodied in
critical articles and reviews. For information
address Harper & Brothers*

4-3

FIRST EDITION

B-5



This book is complete and unabridged
in contents, and is manufactured in strict
conformity with Government regulations
for saving paper.

Spain—1936 to 1939

THE main facts, figures, dates and personalities which directly bear upon the period covered in "Try-out In Spain" are given in this brief resumé of events.

After the expulsion of King *Alfonso XIII* the *Spanish Republic* was formed. Two main political tendencies rapidly developed, which can roughly be called the *Rightists* and the *Leftists*. The *Rightists* which included the *Carlists* and *Requetes* (*Monarchists*) were led by *Gil Robles*, and had the whole-hearted support of the powerful *Spanish Catholic Church*. Supporting the *Rightists* were also the majority of the regular *Army*. These different *Rightist* forces never really accepted the *Republic*, and certain military leaders including Generals *Sanjurjo* and *Franco* were involved in schemes for its downfall as early as 1931.

2.60

1937433 MAY 3 1943

T R Y A O U T I N S P A I N

In February 1936, at a General Election, despite frantic propaganda efforts and strong coercion by the Church, the Leftists won a majority and came into power. From the moment of this great defeat the Rightists realized that they could not destroy the Republic by constitutional means, and began actively to plot a military revolt. These plots included consultations with Mussolini, from whom promises of active help were obtained.

The murder by Anarchist elements of the Royalist leader *Calvo Sotelo* brought about the explosion slightly before the date that had been planned, and General Sanjurjo, who was to have led the revolt, was killed in an airplane accident on his way to take command, thus making way for his second in command, General Franco, as leader.

Supporting Franco was 95% of the regular officers, the *Tercio* (Spanish Moroccan Foreign Legion), the *Moors*, the greater part of the *Guardia Civil* (armed police) the Monarchists and, with all its immense influence in an intensely Catholic country, the Church. Numerically the greater part of the *Fleet* remained loyal to the Government, but the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

three most powerful units, the modern British-built cruisers, the *Canarias*, the *Almirante Cervera* and one other, joined Franco.

The political party of the Franco revolt was the *Falange*, founded upon a combination of the Fascist and Nazi ideals of militant nationalism by *Jose Antonio de Rivera* (son of the former Dictator General Primo de Rivera), who was captured and shot by the Government, and has subsequently become the almost sanctified martyr of the *Falange* cause.

Franco's chief general was Gen. *Mola*, who was also killed in an airplane crash in 1937. It was Mola who led the advance to the very gates of Madrid in October 1936, and who coined the phrase '*Fifth Column*' in a radio appeal to the city to surrender. From among many others, Gen. *Quiapo de Llano* stood out as being picturesque. He was known as the '*Radio General*' because of his broadcasts from Seville. It was he who captured Malaga and instituted a brutally oppressive regime in the southern province of Andalucia. He was out of sympathy with the *Falange* Party, and as a result fell into disgrace in 1939. He was reputedly the heaviest drinker in Spain.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The strongest political figure, after Franco himself, was Franco's brother-in-law, *Serrano Suñer* (his wife is sister to Franco's wife), and he remained Minister for Foreign Affairs until 1942. He was a leader of the Falange Party, and, at heart, fanatically pro-Axis and anti-Democracies.

Opposing the revolt was something like 65% of the masses of the people, who supported President *Azaña*, a man of immense mental stature but physically ill, and the Labour Prime Minister, *Largo Caballero*. After the Government's flight from Madrid to Valencia, when it seemed certain that Mola must capture the capital, Caballero was replaced by Dr. *Negrin*, a man of immense drive, energy and vision, who remained the head and heart of the Republican cause until the end in March 1939.

His Foreign Secretary was *Alvarez del Vayo*, who had a sincere and obstinate belief that the justice of the Government cause would force the League of Nations to intervene against Italy's and Germany's open assistance to Franco's military revolt.

From the outbreak of the Rebellion or Civil War in July 1936 until May 1937—the period of the Red

T R Y - O U T I N S P A I N

Terror—the Extreme Left (Anarchists and Communists) held all the real power on the Government side, and were guilty of violent and brutal excesses against the monied and military classes, and especially against priests and nuns. These extremist elements were drawn from the great Trade Unions. There were several of these political Trade Unions. One was the *U.G.T.* (General Union of Workers) which was comparatively moderate in its beliefs. Another was the *C.N.T.* (National Confederation of Workers) which was Communistic in its leanings. Allied to the *C.N.T.*, but still more violent and extreme, was the *F.A.I.* (Iberian Anarchist Federation) and and the *A.I.T.*, another Anarchist off-shoot. Yet another Trade Union, the *P.O.U.M.* (Workers Party of the Union of Marxists) had Trotskyist leanings, and really formed a kind of Fifth Column inside the Government lines. They were wiped out in May 1937, and their brilliant leader, *Nin*, imprisoned. All these Trade Unions can be classified together as *Anarchosyndicalists*.

All these warring extremist parties were swept out of all political power by Negrin, after severe

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

street fighting, in May 1937; though they continued to exist as non-political units.

Playing a lone hand was President *Companys*, who was head of the *Catalonian Republic*. The Catalans are a different race, and speak a separate language, and Catalonia, with Barcelona as its capital, had for long sought independence from the rest of Spain, *Companys* having led an unsuccessful attempt to break away in October 1934, which was put down by the Republic after a few hours of fighting, *Companys* having spent the intervening 21 months in prison. *Companys* also was allowed to remain President of Catalonia after Negrin's big clean-up in May 1937, but all power passed into Negrin's hands from that date.

Another outstanding political personality on the Government side was a slippery Socialist called *Prieto*, who although he became temporarily Minister of War under Negrin always believed in the inevitability of a Franco victory. He took good care to get away to South America before the collapse, firmly replying to all attempts to get him to return by nicely timed heart-attacks.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

A very different type was *Dolores Ibarru*, known as *La Passionara* (the Passion Flower) because of her quite incredibly moving and brilliant eloquence. She was a Communist, but all heart and no head.

The best known, or anyway best publicized, of the Government Generals was Gen. *Miaja* who organized the defense of Madrid. Of the young men General *Rojo*, who captured the Franco stronghold of Teruel early in 1938, was probably the best. He had received his training in Russia.

The major campaigns of the war were, firstly, Mola's *march on Madrid*, which finally ended when the Italians were disgracefully routed at Guadalajara. Secondly, Quiepo de Llano's offensive in the extreme south from Seville which captured Andalucia in February 1937. Thirdly, Mola's *campaign against the Basques* on the Northern coast of Spain, including the important towns of Bilbao and Santander, in the summer of 1937, in which something like 120,000 Italians took part. Fourthly, the offensive of March 1938, when Franco succeeded in reaching the sea north of Valencia, so separating Government Spain into two, Catalonia, with Barcelona as its capital,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and the central area with Madrid, Valencia, Alicante and Almeria, after which all the north, north-east, north-west, west and south-west of Spain was in Franco hands. This campaign included the first air-blink on a capital city. Fifthly, the campaign which captured Barcelona and Catalonia in January 1939, and led directly to the Government collapse in March 1939.

The International line-up was approximately as follows:

ITALY. Italy was committed up to the hilt to help Franco. During the course of the war something like 200,000 Italians took part in the fighting. In addition she had a large fleet of bombers based on the island of Majorca. Italian submarines also unquestionably took part in helping Franco's blockade, producing real famine throughout Government Spain, which comprised the industrial rather than the food producing areas of the country.

GERMANY. Germany was far more cautious than Italy in her manner of giving assistance, but as soon as Italian help seemed likely to prove insufficient to assure a rapid Franco victory, she sent some 3,000

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to 5,000 technicians, who took over control of artillery and organized transport. She had a small but very efficient air-force which, before the end, was greatly increased. High German officers undoubtedly planned the later campaigns, those of 1938 and 1939, which brought the final victory to Franco.

RUSSIA. Russia, remembering the words of Lenin that Spain was the next European country where conditions were ripe for Communism, had a strong ideological influence on the Anarchosyndicalists, and, after the outbreak of the war, Government territory was flooded with Communist propaganda.

ENGLAND and FRANCE. The England and France of Baldwin and Blum sat on the fence, hoping to localize the conflict by non-intervention, but too weak and unconvinced of the justice of a cause that had begun with so much violence and bloodshed to do anything effective. The England and France of Chamberlain and Daladier found matters had already gone too far in Spain for anything useful to be done, and concentrated on preventing public opinion from becoming accurately informed as to the real issues at stake.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

A powerful element in the struggle was the *International Brigade* consisting of anti-Fascist volunteers from all over the world including the United States, Britain, France, Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, who did a great deal of hard fighting, and probably saved the Government cause during the early period of the war before the Government had had time to raise and train a People's Army. They certainly saved Madrid in October 1936. Their casualties were about 50% of every engagement in which they took part, so that although fresh volunteers kept on filtering through the Anglo-French non-intervention controls, their numbers never, at any one moment, passed beyond 6,000 men. They were disbanded and sent out of Spain in 1938 so as to reinforce Alvarez del Vayo's argument before the League of Nations that the only foreigners fighting in Spain were on Franco's side.

RELIGION. The *Catholic Church* in Spain was overwhelmingly pro-Franco for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the Government had taken over a certain amount of valuable Church property and secondly, had taken away the Church's former monopoly of

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the control of education. Further the Republic numbered among its supporters many Communists and Anarchists who were violently anti-clerical.

The Government, during the period of the Red Terror when it was under the control of the Anarchosyndicalists, committed many crimes and atrocities, killing priests and nuns and burning Churches. The Basques on the north coast, however, who loyally supported and fought for the Government were, and remained, passionately Catholic.

Under Negrin a few Churches were allowed to open, and all religious persecution ended. As so many of the Government supporters were strongly anti-clerical, however, religious toleration was still rather surreptitious.

Prelude

EVERYONE agrees that the First World War began in 1914. A lot of people, however, mistakenly think that the Second World War began in 1939. In fact it began in Spain on July 18-19, 1936.

It was then that the Totalitarian States tried out their strength. The alignment of forces was potentially the same then as it is today: Germany and Italy versus Russia, England, France, and a sympathetic America, Spain itself being used as the experimental guinea pig. The only big difference was that the England of Chamberlain, unhappy heir to the still more supine England of Baldwin and Macdonald, frightened of the old Bolshevik bogey, had not the wit nor the courage to support the side that was prepared on their behalf to call what was then still only the Fascist bluff.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The Spanish Government, since it represented a majority, could have won if England and France had given it, or even sold it, half as much help as Germany and Italy gave to Franco. If that had happened the spreading of the war to the rest of the world might still have come, but would have been delayed, and would certainly have been fought on different and more favorable terms. Instead we invented non-intervention so that only the Fascist countries could intervene. With immense ingenuity we arranged that whoever won in Spain they would be our enemy. We sent sufficient help to the Government to enrage the Fascists and give some justice to their accusation that we were prolonging the war, and what we sent was insufficient to enable the Government to win, thereby justly earning their bitter reproaches for all that subsequently befell. That is what is always referred to as our national genius for compromise.

I was in Warsaw on September 1, 1939, when Germany attacked Poland, and two days later when England declared war on Germany, and I knew then that what I was witnessing there was only a continuation of the outbreak of war that I had seen in Barcelona

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

in July, 1936. Less than six months separated the termination of the Spanish war and the German attack upon Poland. There was a similar, slightly longer, pause between the end of the Polish and the beginning of the Norwegian campaigns, but between neither of them was there peace, only a necessary suspension of hostilities while the new offensive was prepared.

It was only because the world chose to bury its head in the sand for the first two and a half years of the war when it was still confined to Spain that Hitler was able to follow it up with two years of almost unbroken success against the rest of Continental Europe. If his designs in Spain had met with a reverse would he have felt strong enough to attack Poland?

There was what amounted to a conspiracy of silence about the real issues at stake. In England, on my brief visits there from Spain, I found that discussion of the subject was discouraged, considered tedious and not in quite the best of taste.

Supremely illustrating this was the comment I received from the editor of a London paper for which I was working temporarily during the absence on leave of their own correspondent.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

I described in a dispatch how on returning to Barcelona by car early in 1938 I was stopped like everyone else for search to see whether I was bringing back food, which was prohibited since all supplies were Government property. In searching an old man standing near me, one of the Guardias de Asalto found a dozen or so potatoes concealed about him, which he sought to remove. The old man begged to be allowed to keep them, explaining that he had tramped on foot all day long to find them and take them back to his almost starving family. The Guardia insisted, and a struggle followed. Suddenly, finding himself overpowered, the old man seized the revolver out of the Guardia's belt and shot him through the stomach. Immediately the three other Guardias fired, and the old man fell dead, but still clutching in his hand one of his precious potatoes.

I sent the story as fairly illustrating the condition of affairs in Government Spain at that time, and a day later received a cable from the paper which read, "Good story, but quite unusable." I took the trouble to write and ask why it had been judged unusable, and in due course received a note with the following

T R Y - O U T I N S P A I N

reply. "Newspapers are mostly read at breakfast, and there is nothing better calculated to put a man off his second egg and rasher of bacon than reading a story forcing him to realize that not so very far away there are people dying for a handful of potatoes. If one newspaper puts him off his breakfast he takes pains to buy another one. That we naturally wish to avoid."

Today that attitude is happily dead, but due to the conspiracy of silence which at the time prevented the world from knowing anything but a tiny part of what was really happening in Spain, the vast majority of people that I meet fail completely to realize that the miseries the world is suffering today have their immediate origins in the two and a half years of the Spanish Civil War.

Since then I have seen the Polish, Iranian, and something of the Greek campaigns. I have been threatened with death by the Gestapo in Rumania, and chased out of Bulgaria by the entry of the German troops, but it is to that first long and bitter struggle between the dictators and the democracies that I still look back as being my most dramatic and terrible experience of the Second World War.

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

Chapter I

ON A certain fine day in August, 1914, at the age of seven, I sat on a hard green seat on the front at Sea View in the Isle of Wight and felt deeply aggrieved that my father should have selected today to be so unusually disobliging as to refuse to take me out in one of the small red-wing sailboats that were flicking along temptingly in the breeze some three hundred yards away on the agreeably blue Solent. The reason for his refusal was that he wanted to wait for the newspapers to arrive from Ryde, some five miles away, and, as a reason it seemed to me to be a ridiculously inadequate one, only partially mitigated by a large bar of Nestlé's chocolate.

Presently a boy arrived on a bicycle and instantly became the center of a fighting mob of straw-hatted gentlemen, among whom I was considerably shocked

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to observe the six-foot four-inch person of my usually tranquil and dignified parent. Halfpennies, pennies, and even sixpences showered upon the unfortunate boy in the general indifference to such things as change as long as they could serve to get hold of one of the precious papers.

My father disentangled himself from the mob and sat down heavily on the hard green seat. I climbed up and looked over his shoulder, and, with some difficulty, spelled out the words, WAR DECLARED, and dimly realized that something had happened which had reduced to nil all prospect of going sailing.

A little less than twenty-two years later I was on holiday with my wife and five-year-old son at a small and very attractive Catalan fishing village named Sitges, some twenty-five miles from Barcelona.

Some exceedingly dull friends of my wife, whom I will call Smith, had insisted that we should go into town for the week end for a party. It seemed to me far too hot for a party even if the Smiths had not been so dull, but my wife felt strongly about it, and so on the Saturday morning, July 18, we duly traveled up to Barcelona.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

At approximately the same time General Franco was launching his revolt in Spanish Morocco.

I bought a copy of *La Vanguardia* and felt slightly peevish that I should be expected to pay fifteen centimos for a paper which contained little but empty white columns. Ever since the February elections, of course, the censor had cut large slices out of all the papers, but today he seemed to have excelled himself, so that there was really very little left to read.

Despite this, however, there was nothing to suggest that things were any more acute than usual. For the past five months, ever since Gil Robles and the Right had lost the elections, Spain had been living on the brink of a volcano, with the Right refusing to accept defeat and co-operate as a normal Opposition in the task of government. Five months of tension without an explosion had inevitably induced a belief that perhaps nothing was going to happen after all. In any case it was extremely difficult to feel anything but profound dislike for the methods of both sides. The Left had fairly won the elections, despite the extraordinary measures taken by the Right to gain a majority, and so my sympathies were very slightly with them, but now some of their hirelings had murdered the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Royalist leader Calvo Sotelo and bundled his mutilated body out onto the steps of his party headquarters, which proved them incapable of exercising the power that they had won.

It had been an extraordinarily bitter election on both sides, but the thing that had shocked me most had been the glimpse I had caught, outside a large convent, of taxis being loaded up with terrified nuns, forced for the first time in ten, twenty, forty years to leave the seclusion to which they had dedicated their lives in order to vote for Gil Robles, of whom the overwhelming majority of them had almost certainly never heard. The expression on the face of one bowed old lady of over sixty when, perhaps for the first time in her life, she saw a tram tearing and clanging along toward her, had stuck in my mind. Nothing but a direct order from the Church itself could have persuaded her to abandon a life of contemplation and prayer to vote for a puffy, green-faced young politician in Madrid whom she had never seen or heard, and who stood for things she most certainly had had no opportunity of understanding. Such a desecration by the Church of precisely those things for which its

T R Y - O U T I N S P A I N

Founder stood seemed to me, as a Catholic, very much like mortal sin.

But despite the shamefully partisan attitude of the Church in Spain they had been beaten, and the baffled Right had from that day worked and planned unceasingly to bring about a condition of affairs where they could overthrow the Republic by force.

With my much-censored paper soon finished I had time to look out of the window and wonder about these things.

Fifty miles away on my left, rising sheer out of the fertile Valley of the Llobregat rose the mysterious purple-blue peaks of the sacred mountain of Montserrat. Always this mountain seemed distinct from the earth, to float above it, wrapped in legends as old as Christianity. Surely this is the most lovely land in all the world, and the unhappiest.

There is a story, often repeated in Spain, of how, after the Creation, the nations of the world, counting up and comparing their various blessings, were envious of the disproportionately large share of the good things of this world that had been given to Spain. It had rich soil, a sun that always smiled but yet did

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

not burn, wine, and the world's most beautiful women—a land of song and plenty.

Accordingly they formed a deputation to place their grievance before God himself. And God looked upon Spain, and saw that it was good, and too closely resembled that Eden of which the world had proved itself unworthy. And after he had weighed the matter He spoke as follows, "What I have created I will not destroy, but to show you that I will not favor this country beyond any other I will grant the right in perpetuity to my Enemy the Devil that he may give to Spain her governments."

And the representatives of all the other nations of the world pondered upon these words, and went away satisfied.

Our rendezvous was not until eight o'clock, and about seven I decided to go down from Bonanova, where we were staying with friends, into the town for a drink to reinforce myself against the rapidly approaching horror of the Smith conversation.

Everything was as usual—the Ramblas full of its usual procession of laughing, noisy, beautifully animal people. Daring lads were, also as usual, engaged

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

in the recognized pastime of pinching the bottoms of any unaccompanied girls, and then shouting "Guapa" after their retreating figures. "Guapa" means simply "pretty one" or "gorgeous" if you prefer it, and apparently completely covers the guilt of the preceding little familiarity. Although they usually register maidenly anger, any girl who walks the entire length of the Ramblas and does not have her bottom pinched retires hastily to examine herself in the mirror in the hope of discovering what is wrong with her appearance.

I took a taxi back home as I was a bit late, and in that way had my first indirect inkling that this was perhaps to be no ordinary summer evening. As I got out to pay, a dog near by set up the long chilling howl which is commonly associated with death. I paused for a split second because to me there will always be something a little frightening in that desolate sound against the stillness of evening, and then went on counting out the fare. As he pocketed it the driver peered at me through the fading light and said quietly, "That is for death. There will be death tonight."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Afterward I wondered whether he had said this without special meaning or whether he knew something of what was to come and was warning me to stay at home.

Certainly most of the night clubs and cabarets seemed unusually empty, though there was the usual sprinkling of foreigners. By 4 A.M. I felt that I had had enough, but the others wanted to go on, and we drove to a place high up near the Montjuic fortress that I did not know. Smith was rather a long time coming back from parking his car, and explained that the police had demanded his papers and searched him for arms, before letting him return. There seemed to be some sort of mass arrests going on, he said, probably searching for the author of one of the almost nightly murders in the medieval slum quarter of the Barrio Chino.

Rather suddenly the cabaret emptied, but as it was nearly dawn this seemed reasonable enough. It was stuffy, and I was tired. Side-stepping what threatened to be a long anecdote I moved over to a small window, pushed it open, and leaned out.

There were the first signs of dawn just staining

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the sky. The shape of Tibidabo, the peak that lies behind Barcelona, was faintly outlined against a lighter shade of blue. Street lamps lower down were switched out. A small cool breeze soothed my eyes and forehead, and borne upon it I thought I heard a sound not unlike a ragged volley of rifle shots.

At long last the others had had enough, and we trooped out into the naked-looking dawn streets, just as the sun touched the top of the nearest houses.

Once in the car it was agreed that it was too late to go to bed, and I suggested driving straight down to Sitges for an early bathe. A sleep versus baths controversy developed, and lasted us all along Cortes Street. As we neared the Paseo de Gracia a taxi drove past at speed going the other way, and four men shouted something that we could not hear. Two minutes later the same taxi passed us coming up from behind, and pulled dangerously across our noses. Smith stamped on the brakes, and we avoided a crash by half mounting the pavement.

We turned to expostulate, and found ourselves looking along two very large automatic pistols. Behind and slightly above them were two of the wildest-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

looking faces I have ever seen. Stage anarchists, with lank black hair, hollow cheeks, and fanatic eyes—but regrettably unaware that they were overacting their parts.

As far as I was concerned the Second World War had begun.

We were ordered out in a tone of voice that made discussion inadvisable and “frisked” for arms, the women’s handbags also being searched. I had a wallet with the Spanish equivalent of a hundred and fifty dollars in it, which was politely returned to me.

“Extranjeros,” said the more human looking of the two—“Foreigners—don’t shoot.” With no discussion or pause, but keeping us covered with their guns, they stepped into Smith’s car and drove off at speed, followed by their two friends in the taxi.

It had all taken about ninety seconds. A minute and a half ago we had been trying to decide for or against an early bathe in Sitges twenty-five miles away. It had seemed a decision of considerable importance. Now we were stranded without a car in the middle of a city of madmen apparently engaged in a revolution.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

We had still no perception of the scope and implications of the thing. In the October revolution not so very long before, when Cataluña had sought to break away from the rest of Spain, there had been a few days' fighting. There were no indications that this was to be so very different.

The obvious thing to do seemed to be to get the women home safely while we went to protest about the loss of the car to whatever powers seemed to be on the winning side. We were lucky enough to capture what must have been one of the last taxis that were to circulate in Barcelona for many a long day, and packed them off to Bonanova with orders to brew large quantities of coffee against the time of our arrival. We were to be glad of this foresight by the time we rejoined them.

Having got the wives safely off our hands we went on foot to the main police station in the Via Layetana, but found it protected by a weary but determined ring of Guardias de Asalto, one of whom told us that he had been on unbroken duty for seventy-two hours. It was impossible to get into the building,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

he assured us, and recommended trying the substation in the Calle Paris.

We accordingly toiled up the hill in the already unpleasantly hot sun, and were ushered into the chief's office, where we made our formal charge of having had our car stolen at the pistol point.

The chief wrote assiduously, while large beads of perspiration formed on the dome of his completely bald head. Suddenly there was a shot, the splintering of glass, and a bullet clipped a small hole in the ceiling. A tiny cloud of dusty plaster descended upon the chief's head, where it mingled with the perspiration, forming a light paste. Before anyone had time to move, fierce firing broke out along the whole length of the street, and after one frozen second the police chief took up a strategic position under the desk.

Smith and I went out into the passage, and, as the police station itself seemed to be the focal point of the fighting, decided to choose a lull to bolt across the road to the entrance to the penthouse apartment of an English acquaintance who lived immediately opposite.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

We made it without much difficulty, with only a few bullets whining along like infuriated bees ten feet overhead, and rather wearily climbed to the top floor.

The acquaintances upon whom we were thus calling uninvited at sixty-thirty in the morning require brief description. They were three men who lived together in complete harmony in a graceful little world of their own. They favored Byronic shirts in the palest shades of silk, and corduroy riding breeches. No woman was permitted to mar the peace of their establishment, and the nearest thing to work that was permitted to approach their threshold was the rare issue of a book of belles lettres, by one of their number.

The door was opened by one of the trio, clad in lilac silk, and we were hospitably bidden to enter. Our explanations were swept aside. "You can hardly guess," one of our hosts assured us, "what a happy thing is your arrival. You are just in time to help us to decide on the color scheme for our tiny roof garden," and we were piloted out of the bay win-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

dows. At irregular intervals a bullet whined up from the street.

"Did you know," chimed in he in palest blue, "that every year in Barcelona they hold a concourse of poets, and after they have heard them all the poem which is judged to be the third best is rewarded with a rose fashioned in silver, and the second best one made of gold. That which is the very best is given a perfect natural bloom."

My confession that I did not, together with an unworthy impulse to remark upon the fierce competition there must be in order to persuade the judges that the other fellow's poem was just a shade better than your own, was drowned by a thunderous hammering on the door. A second later, without a word, six Guardias de Asalto pushed their way into the flat, flung open the windows, and began firing rapidly into the street.

"And now," continued our host, utterly undisturbed, "what do you say to our scheme for a flood of something really bizarre, like bougainvillia along that wall. Alaric here wants petunias, but I think it so drab and middle class of him—the dear boy."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Feeling a little unequal to the situation we took our leave from this world where revolutions were clearly too uncouth to be allowed acknowledgement.

Funnily enough only a few hours later I heard another equally improbable story of that first incredible night.

A very English couple had arrived at Barcelona by air on the first stage of their honeymoon on the previous evening, and had repaired to the Hotel Colon for the bridal night. They had been out dancing with friends until very late, and no sooner had they retired than the door burst open, and a group of soldiers thrust their way to the windows and began firing across the Plaza Cataluna. The gentlemen expostulated in precise but controlled English without producing any results. Further representations being equally ineffective he decided that the well-bred thing to do was to ignore the whole ill-mannered crowd of them, and returned with dignity to the marital bed.

But as bullets continued to whistle about the place and troops marched and countermarched about his room, a great and just indignation was born in his

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

bosom. This was emphatically not cricket, and, by God, sir, the consul should know of it.

During the early morning the hotel which had been a center of Franco resistance was, apart from a few snipers on the roof, captured by the Anarchist mob which had been armed by the Catalan government, known as the Generalidad, in order to destroy all such centers of Fascist resistance.

When the outraged husband and his haughty spouse, their marriage still unconsummated, swept down to the hotel lobby they were met by a ragged, blood-stained Anarchist, armed with a submachine gun. Nothing daunted they descended upon him, and pressing into his hand a twenty-five-peseta note in full settlement they informed him, in English of course, but spoken slightly louder than usual in order to ensure comprehension, that they considered his hotel a disgrace and proposed making the strongest possible recommendation to the British consul that he advise the competent authorities that the hotel was unfit for British patronage.

With that they made their way with dignity and without haste into the bullet-swept streets to make

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

good their threat with the consular representative of his Britannic Majesty.

But such slight comedy was the merest foil to the vast and bloody tragedy that was rapidly unfolding around us as we walked up the long hill toward Bonanova.

The capacity for resistance of the small pro-Franco garrison in Barcelona under General Goded was far less than the Generalidad had believed. They opened up the national arsenals to the submerged tenth from the Barrio Chino, which suddenly found itself free of all restraints and armed for the payment of grudges formed during a lifetime of oppression and bitter poverty. This was their hour. The long-awaited time had come for the destruction of all those things to which they ascribed their misery—the Military, the Church, and the Rich. Armed in their thousands they poured out of their disease-infested hovels—suddenly free to kill and to destroy, men and many women too, direct descendents of the knitting harpies that sat forever in the shadow of the guillotine, all out for blood.

Only a few thousand idealists were concerned to

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

wipe out the real supporters of Franco's revolt, and these quickly enough completed their task. The resistance was insufficient to satisfy the blood lust released by this incredible hour of officially licensed slaughter.

The panic arming of the mob by the Generalidad in the mistaken belief that the Franco faction in Barcelona was infinitely stronger had released a flood of murder and lawlessness which they themselves were quite helpless to control, and which was soon to hold them too in its power. This was the Red Terror with a vengeance, and was to rage unchecked for over nine months until Negrin smashed it in three days' street fighting the following May; the revolution within a revolution, even as a hundred and forty odd years earlier the revolution within a revolution had destroyed the Terror of Robespierre and created a government that was to pave the way for Napoleon.

From the roof, when once we reached home, we could count fourteen fires, each one of them marking a Church, a Convent, or a Monastery, where the mob was wreaking its vengeance upon the inmates.

The tragedy was the worst since it was the inno-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

cent who were suffering, and not the guilty. Those Princes of the Church who, by meddling in politics, had created the policy of repression that was the cause of all this hatred had for the most part escaped, and it was upon the harmless, humble, frequently saintly priests and nuns, who knew nothing of politics, realizing that they had no place in the teachings of their Founder, upon whom the appalling punishment now fell.

A telegram reached me from the London *Daily Telegraph* during the morning, appointing me their special correspondent, and the need for first-hand news combined with the necessity for discovering what arrangements the consulate had made for the evacuation of women and children, decided me to descend once more into the town.

The intervening hours since I had left had produced incredible changes. On my way down I passed a burning church. The flames had only caught at one end of the building and I pushed my way into the entrance. Flames were licking up round the altar, on which still stood two beautiful wrought silver candlesticks gleaming through the clouds of black smoke.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

From the high carved stone pulpit an elderly priest swung very slowly to and fro by his sickeningly elongated neck. He had offered resistance, a guardia told me, when they had seized the Sacred Wafer and hurled it into the flames, and had died cursing them. Around the walls the pale painted faces of the Saints slowly distorted into nightmare grimaces as the heat melted the wax of which they were made.

Lower down, just above the British consulate, a crowd had formed outside the entrance to a convent. I went in with them, and found a long wall lined with coffins from which the lids had been stripped. The poor, century-old bodies of the nuns were exposed, and what flesh still clung to the bones was slowly blackening in the hot sun. Fresh coffins were being excavated from the convent burial ground and a peseta was being charged for the hire of a long stick with which to strike or insult with unnameable obscenities these sightless, shrunken relics. A charnel-house stench and my own sick horror drove me back into the street.

In the consulate the contrast was marked. Well-bred disorder ruled the day. Large numbers of half-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

baked young men with no experience at organization, but whose temporary services had been accepted because they had been to the right schools, were engaged in being obstructive and superior under the impression that this was the correct diplomatic attitude.

The cruiser *London* had arrived, and I was told that a car would be sent at 6 o'clock to collect my wife and son. I telephoned and told her to be ready, and that I would be back before that time to give her money and instructions as to what to do when she was landed at Marseille.

As I left I met the American vice-consul on the way to his office. The trouble was, he explained, that this was on the opposite side of the Plaza Cataluña, and there were still a considerable number of Fascist snipers on the roofs of the surrounding buildings, who were busily engaged in taking pot shots at anyone unwise enough to show himself.

We approached the square from which there was certainly the sound of irregular but quite heavy rifle fire. After discussion we decided that the best thing to do was to walk across slowly, with our hands

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

above our heads, and with a white handkerchief prominently displayed in one hand.

We launched ourselves out of the comfortable shelter of the corner from which we had been considering the situation. The square was exclusively populated by seven very dead bodies, four dead horses, and three live ones who, having lost their masters, were wandering about aimlessly.

"The great thing," I said, trying hard to sound calm, "is not to walk fast, which would arouse suspicion."

"I quite agree," my companion replied, as a shot kicked up dust about six feet to our right.

"The only danger is," he continued, "that they are such damned awful shots. They may be aiming at that horse twenty yards away, in which case they will, in all probability, hit us."

"In that case," I suggested, "we at least have the satisfaction of knowing that they are not aiming at us unless they hit the horse."

When we still had twenty yards to go the horse under discussion reared up and collapsed with a bullet through its head.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"That, according to you," said my companion most unnecessarily, "means that they are aiming at us."

We were determined not to run, but that last twenty yards was done in that peculiar gait ordinarily only adopted by contestants in the London-to-Brighton walking race, and the large whisky and soda with which a few minutes later we celebrated our safe arrival in the consulate was more than welcome.

On my way back I passed a major battle for possession of a large monastery on the great street called Diagonal. The monks had barricaded themselves in and appeared to be both determined and well armed. With them, I learned, were a few dozen Franco soldiers who had escaped from the massacred garrison.

At first glance this seemed to confirm the subsequent Government statement, attempting to justify the attacks upon religious houses, in which they maintained that they had been used for the storing of munitions for the Franco revolt. The use of arms by priests seems hard to justify, but they had seen the atrocities inflicted upon such of their number as had

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

surrendered. Unwillingness to become martyrs to a blood-maddened mob does not, however, mean that they were deserving of death. The presence of munitions in the religious houses was, I believe, known only to those few who were deeply involved in the plot, and was almost certainly unsuspected by the rank and file, who paid with their lives for the guilt of their politically ambitious leaders. That in the final crisis they used those arms in an attempt to save themselves from lynching or hanging seems to me to be no justification for their murder.

Not two hundred yards from this battle, in a long side street, small children were running about contentedly in the dusty sunlight, playing the same immemorial games as had their ancestors in almost the same street when Columbus was touring the country in search of assistance for his project of discovering a new world.

My way led me past one of the most notorious brothels in the city. Everywhere else red flags or cloths were fluttering from the windows and balconies to show the political sympathies of the owners. Here, however, a small pink silk sheet had been used.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The gesture seemed to have been appreciated as I counted eleven, presumably stolen, cars outside, all painted with the Anarchist trade-union sign F.A.I. inside, as my companion remarked, the ladies of the town were no doubt suffering a spot of worse than leath on a strictly cash basis.

I reached home just before six, to learn that the car from the consulate had called nearly two hours before, and carried off my wife and son with three suitcases and not a penny in the world. Their ship, I learned, was sailing at sunset.

Once again I trailed off on foot the three miles across the city, this time right down to the docks; dodging streets where the sniping was still heavy and forcing my way through countless militia controls until I was within a hundred yards of the *London*. Beyond this I could not get, as, if I embarked, I was told, I should not be permitted to land again.

After what seemed like hours of fruitless arguing a British sailor from the cruiser passed near enough for me to hail him. I explained my trouble, and he agreed to bring my wife to the foot of the gangway. To this the Spanish guard reluctantly agreed, and

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

gathered round in a suspicious circle to watch for anything illegal such as the passing of papers. The export of all money from Spain was absolutely prohibited, and I began to wonder how I was going to get to my wife the twenty-pound and thousand-peseta notes that represented all my realizable capital, and which I held, folded small, in the palm of my hand.

She and my small boy arrived, and we began the sort of artificial conversation that is inevitable when six overtly hostile people are following every word. After a few minutes I interjected into a long sentence, while keeping the same tone of voice, "Drop your handbag—hard." She goggled for a split second, but got the idea with creditable speed, and contrived a fumbling crash that looked real, but which actually hurled the bag on the stone dock with a force that burst it open, and shot powder, rouge, and God knows what in all directions, and then to look attractively helpless.

Immediately the Guardias relaxed, and a general scramble ensued, everybody cramming back into the bag whatever they had retrieved. With a powder puff

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

I thrust in the notes that I had been holding in the palm of my hand against the moment of some such opportunity.

Less than an hour later the two hundred women and children were transferred to the destroyer that carried them safely to France. As the ship disappeared in the fading light I thought of my very small son's, "Don't worry, Daddy. I'll look after her for you," and suddenly felt very much alone. Turning my back to the sea I stared a moment at the beautiful, agonizing city. Fires showed at a dozen points, and there was the occasional crack of rifle shots.

Very wearily I set off on the three-mile trudge, back to an empty flat and a most uncertain future.

Chapter II

THE huge forces of destruction unchained by the revolution could not readily find the necessary opposition upon which to expend themselves. The really active Franco partisans were wiped out or forced into hiding within a few days. The burning of churches and murdering of nuns and priests lasted a few weeks, but by mid-August even this outlet was nearly exhausted. The Monster had only tasted blood, not satisfied its appetite, and must find fresh victims. Already there were blood feuds among different branches of the militant trade-unions, and to prevent serious clashes among their most useful and active supporters in the anti-Fascist Front, those who were seeking to direct it now did their best to turn popular fury toward the Rich—the employers and property owners.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

This gave far more scope because the definition was more vague. Anyone with a clean collar could be counted as one of the Rich, while attacks upon the employer classes could be cloaked under such fine-sounding headings as "Industrial and Economic Reform."

Measures were passed through the Catalan Parliament whereby all salaries must be paid even where the factories were closed through lack of labor or raw materials. As profits almost everywhere ceased immediately after the outbreak of the revolution business accounts became rapidly exhausted. Legislation then compelled the owners to obtain a loan from the Government-controlled banks upon the security of machinery, office furniture, and premises. When this sum too became exhausted the private fortune of the owner had to be used to continue paying salaries, and then, finally, a loan must be obtained upon the owner's private house and property for the same purpose.

When both the business and private fortunes of the owners were exhausted their first default upon salaries was taken as "economic sabotage," and the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

trade-union gunmen would call upon the culprit, and "take him for a ride" to the pine forests behind the city. Here every morning between twenty and sixty bodies were regularly to be found.

Naturally this rapidly developed into a system for paying off old personal grudges. A possibly rightfully dismissed employee could lay information of "sabotage" in the form of concealed wealth, and ensure the search of his former employer's house. In one such case, at which I happened to be present, the search party unearthed nothing more damning than a dinner jacket, and an old top hat. Confession to ownership, however, was sufficient to lead to immediate execution and the burning down of his house.

No accurate estimate is possible of the number of executions carried out in Barcelona alone in this way during the first month of the revolution, but reliable sources suggest that it must have been in the neighborhood of twenty thousand. Some idea of the enormous scale upon which these nightly murders were being carried out was brought home forcibly to me one afternoon early in August when out walking on the slopes of Tibidabo. A small crowd had gath-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ered round a well, set at the foot of a garden. From it three bodies had been hauled out before my arrival. Their removal now allowed two more to float to the surface. In an hour eighteen were removed in this way from this one small well, of which four were women. In every case the victims had had their hands and feet tied, and had been thrown down the well while still living.

Terrorism, however, was not all on one side. Quite early in August the "Phantom Car" made its appearance. Almost every night a car, painted with the trade-union signs, F.A.I. or C.N.T. (Federacion de Anarchistas Ibericas and Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores), circulated in the streets. Wherever it could find a group of four or five "milicianos" it would draw in to the curb, the driver would ask some question, and immediately a second person, in the rear seat, would open up with a tommy gun at point-blank range. Then with a cry of "Arriba España! Viva Franco!" the car would be off before the survivors had time to do anything effective.

My inquiries suggested that there were, in fact, several "phantom cars," run by a small suicide squad

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of Franco sympathizers, whose parents or friends had already suffered death at the hands of the Anarchists, and whose sole object was to kill as many of their enemies as possible, before themselves being killed. In any case their activities very nearly succeeded in terrorizing the Anarchosyndicalists off the streets after dark, and produced a state of extreme nervousness well illustrated by the following incident.

Information reached the Syndicalists' headquarters which led to the discovery of a young priest, who had been hidden in a private house in Bonanova, since July 19, and a squad of gunmen arrived to arrest him late one night. The priest, at first, begged them to let him go, even offering to bribe them in exchange for liberty, but finding all this quite useless his whole manner suddenly changed. His fear seemed to leave him, and to be replaced by an almost menacing dignity. He warned them solemnly that if they took him away it would mean their own deaths as well as his. Only momentarily cowed by his strange manner, they seized him, put him in the waiting car, and drove off to the Plaza de la Republica, where his "trial" was to take place.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The Plaza was in almost total darkness as a wartime measure, but the public buildings were strongly guarded against surprise attack by a company of milicianos. The car bearing the priest drew up, and the guard advanced to challenge them. At that moment the young priest leaned out of the window and shouted, "Arriba España! Viva Franco! The phantom car brings vengeance." Immediately from all quarters of the square the guards opened fire, drowning the shouts of explanation from the other occupants of the car, not ceasing until not only the priest but also his four captors were dead, riddled with bullets.

Only when the bodies were examined, and a witness of the priest's arrest questioned, was the true story pieced together.

Getting out such stories as this to my paper from a town which was controlled, if such a word can be applied to mob rule, obviously presented some difficulties and dangers. Mostly I confined myself to cabling only the most innocuous stuff, which I knew would never see print, and once or twice a week writing a long dispatch which would go by the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

British destroyer to Marseille, to be telephoned to London from there.

The British consul did his best to prevent this means of communication, partly from the belief that all newspaper correspondents, with the exception of course of those representing the *London Times*, were an even greater menace to civilization than were the Anarchists. In point of fact his efforts were distressing to me more as a revelation of a condition of mind all too common among the lower official classes of my fellow countrymen, than for their effectiveness. Later this official had rather unwelcome publicity for his inglorious behavior when machine-gunned while bathing at Caldetas. The dispatches, as far as I can remember, began: "The British Consul-General to Barcelona, who despite the dangerous plight of a large number of British subjects, is at present on holiday, had an alarming experience while bathing at the popular seaside resort of Caldetas," etc.

One of our number, when summoned to the "presence" to explain and account for these stories replied, "I am sorry, sir, but you must realize that when a

T R Y - O U T I N S P A I N

person attains to a position as important as your own, whatever he does, however ridiculous, is news."

By mid-August something approaching a fixed front line had been established. Cataluña was solidly anti-Franco, but in the neighboring province of Aragon, Government forces were seeking to press on to the capture of the city of Huesca, 150 miles north-east of Barcelona which acted as one of the outer bastions in the defense of the great Franco stronghold of Saragossa. Another effort to capture the important naval and aerial island base of Majorca had ended in hopeless and costly fiasco, so that if I wished to see something of the actual fighting the Huesca front seemed to be my best chance.

Difficulties of transport were almost insuperable, and it was only after nearly a week of fruitless effort that I decided to accept a friend's offer of the loan of his motorcycle. I detest motorcycles, being unhappily conscious that my six-foot-one person presents a somewhat ridiculous aspect when perched upon one. However, contrary to my usual custom, I decided that my personal feelings must be sacrificed,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and early one morning I set off on my revolting vehicle.

It was comparatively easy going as far as Lerida, over the mountains that flanked Montserrat, from which I could see the icy peaks of the Pyrenees, far away in the north, snow-covered even now in August. From there to Barbastro, however, the bad road was continually blocked by lorry loads of wild-looking milicianos, each car decorated with such optimistic signs as "To Saragossa and Victory." In many of the lorries were a few milicianas, mostly prostitutes from the gutters of the city, but armed with heavy rifles which I was convinced they had no idea how to handle, still less to use.

The delays made it impossible to get beyond Barbastro before the light failed, and I accordingly passed an uncomfortable and bug-infested night in the local "fonda." No alcohol was on sale anywhere nearer the front than Lerida, which, while personally regrettable, seemed to show that there was some guiding intelligence behind the very musical-comedy efforts at warlikeness that I had so far encountered.

Beyond the town the ground rose and the air fresh-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ened. The bleak Aragonese plateau looked depressingly empty, almost the only signs of movement being the eagles that swept to and fro across the empty sky.

At the last village before Huesca, which had been recaptured by the Government troops a few days before, when the Insurgents had withdrawn to the hills that constituted the final line of defense before Huesca, I came upon my first real signs of destruction. Artillery fire had reduced every single house to a condition of greater or lesser dereliction.

At field headquarters, in the only partly destroyed Alcaidia, I interviewed a very sleepy general, who gave me a pass to go up to the firing line. He told me that at dawn this same day Government forces had stormed the last Fascist line of defense along a ridge of hills known as Estrecho Quinto, and that the enemy had fallen back into the city itself, some four miles away.

I came to this line of hills a quarter of an hour later. From them the road fell away sharply, and then ran dead straight into Huesca. I climbed to a low crest, where two large guns were mounted. Both

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

had been efficiently destroyed by the retreating Fascists, and the ground was littered with smashed and bent rifle cartridges. Among them I found a box of flat-nosed dum dum bullets of the kind that have been universally banned for use against human beings.

All this destruction seemed to suggest an orderly retreat rather than a rout, and I asked a soldier what had happened. He replied, "I'll get the officer in charge," and let out a shrill whistle at a nervous, bespectacled individual, who came up at a smart trot, and saluted the soldier briskly. The soldier jerking his thumb in my direction, did not return the salute, from which I deduced that the Anarchist principles of universal equality did not extend as low as officers.

From the officer I learned that at dawn the enemy had been seen withdrawing, and that when the Government troops had arrived they had to do little more than speed them on their way with a few following shots—so much for the heroic storming of the heights.

There seemed little to do but to sit down somewhere and eat my sardines and dry bread. I selected one of the captured gun mounts, from which I could

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

stare straight down into the Franco city of Huesca. The day was absolutely still. A little ragged rifle fire, two miles away, indicated where the Franco forces had halted their retreat and were effectively checking any attempts to approach any nearer to the city. From inside Huesca I could hear the chimes of the cathedral bells, and the occasional hoot of a motor horn.

It seemed a nice comfortable sort of war, and I finished my lunch without haste. Soon a diffident-looking individual, or at least as diffident as a heavily armed Anarchist can look, approached me, and asked if I would take some photographs of the men. Apparently even Anarchists are not immune to the lures of publicity.

I agreed, and immediately some fifty men threw themselves body and soul into the affair. Most of them fixed bayonets and, lying flat on their bellies, fired off a few rounds in the direction of the four-mile-distant city. Others insisted in lying about in artistically "dead" attitudes.

When this performance was over we heard planes approaching from the southeast. The direction from

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

which they were coming suggested that they were friendly planes from Barcelona, and this was soon confirmed by the markings, as five nice-looking French bombers zoomed up behind us. All the men started waving and shouting and feeling pretty good about "their" air force.

I was watching the planes pretty closely which were flying quite low, and I saw one of them drop something that glittered in the sun. A second later I heard an unmistakable rushing sound, and took a neat header into a shallow trench as the first bomb burst fifty yards away.

They "strafed" us for ten minutes, and then came back machine-gunning methodically. When they finally left, and I pulled myself up from the horizontal into the vertical once more, there were thirty-two dead and forty-seven wounded—the dead lying in positions strangely like those so enthusiastically adopted by the same men for my photographs only a quarter of an hour earlier.

The next day I read in the Barcelona press, "Our heroic aviation yesterday morning successfully bombed and machine-gunned enemy fortifications at

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Estrecho Quinto, as the result of which our gallant forces were later able to occupy this important position."

Anyway officially everybody seemed to have been pretty gallant and heroic, even if owing to a failure to report the capture of the position at dawn they had bombed themselves instead of the enemy.

From all the needless bloodshed and muddle that my experience at Estrecho Quinto demonstrated, one man was beginning to emerge who, while typifying the Anarchist elements, yet had the force of character and clearness of vision that might have brought a kind of order out of chaos. If he had lived, the needless excesses of the Extremists might have been curbed in time to prevent the reaction that led to Negrin's counterrevolution in May, 1937, and some sort of Anarchist State might, at least temporarily, have become a working reality.

This man was Buenaventuro Durruti. His past record was criminal, but most, if not all of his crimes had been committed for the purpose of aiding his political beliefs.

Anyone who reads the Anarchist doctrine impar-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

tially and believed it practicable would become an Anarchist. The only point is that to anyone who is not either a hopelessly impractical dreamer, or else a certifiable half-wit, realizes that the program that it wishes to introduce is utterly impossible unless you can first eliminate one or two trifling little disadvantages such as human nature and the basic laws of economics.

Durruti was a man almost without education in the accepted meaning of the word, one of Spain's 70 per cent of illiterates in fact, and I believe that he seriously believed that an Anarchist paradise was a practical possibility.

That men should have followed him although he had served terms of imprisonment as a common criminal need not mean that his followers were necessarily criminals or sympathized with crime, as in Spain there is a completely different national attitude toward those who have been in jail from that obtaining in England or America.

In Spanish politics you are usually either in power or else in prison. Our idea of a respectable Opposition, co-operating in the task of government by con-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Spaniard, whose national sport is that supremely dangerous even if revolting spectacle, the bullfight. Also, under a long succession of cruelly oppressive governments, there has inevitably developed a sort of Robin Hood attraction toward anyone who has defied the law. Reluctance to go to prison is further lessened by the fact that the culprit is fed like a fighting cock by his friends "outside," and every Saturday he is permitted the company of a lady from the local brothel—if he can pay for the luxury.

This state of mind about people who have served prison sentences, to explain which I have rather digressed, finds its final expression in countless ever-popular prisoners' songs. One of these, sung fortissimo by every other housemaid in Spain, is the story of a poor prisoner lamenting that he has not the wings of a dove to fly over the high prison walls, and is supposed to bring tears to the eyes. The first time that I heard it it brought tears to mine, but tears of laughter, as I had a sudden vision of a bullet-headed blue-jawed, two-hundred-pound British Bill Sykes, singing a song in which he sighed poetically for the wings of a bird.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Durruti's past, therefore, counted as an advantage rather than as a disadvantage with the majority of Spaniards, and certainly he found it no hindrance, either moral or practical, in the task that he had set himself.

I had met him more than once, seeking rather than avoiding the acquaintanceship as being a contact with a vital personality that might have a direct influence upon the course of events. Upon my return from the front to Barcelona, therefore, hearing that he was at his favorite restaurant in the Barrio Chino, I went down there as soon as I was able.

I found him in an unusually somber mood. Usually his comic relief, his Court Jester, Viva Villa, could raise the cloud of the dark moods that sometimes seemed to withdraw Durruti from his strange following of sickeningly enraptured women and drunken supporters.

Viva Villa was short and fat, usually three parts drunk, yet always strangely, almost tenderly, aware of his chief's emotions, which he only dimly understood, but which represented for him all the difference between happiness and misery. Drunk or sober

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

he never separated from his beloved tommy gun, upon the stock of which he had cut an innumerable collection of notches, representing the men and women that he claimed to have killed. This gun he always placed comfortably in the chair next to him in any café or restaurant, and to it, when more than usually drunk, he would address long and affectionate conversations. In actual fact he was a harmless soul, none too brave, possessed by a doglike devotion for his leader, and was pathetically satisfied if, by his antics, he could be a David to charm away the occasional black humors of his Saul.

Tonight, however, his efforts were fruitless, and I was surprised, therefore, when Durruti seemed pleased to see me, inviting me to drink with him, and I realized that it was to me that this strange man wished to talk; perhaps because, as a foreigner, I seemed to him outside all the local issues involved.

The instinct for confession, understanding, and, if possible, forgiveness, does not seem to desert the Spanish mind even when it has renounced, and attempted to destroy, the Church that would have given these things.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Slowly, stumbling for words, this grim, strangely formidable creature led up to that which he so desperately wished to tell. Without any real liking or trust on my side I could not wholly resist the appeal that lay behind all this painful effort. I heard from his own lips something of that poverty-embittered youth, that theft to bring bread to those he loved, of which I had previously heard only garbled versions. But it was not of this that he really wished to talk, but of something far more pressing and present of which this was only the background and, perhaps, indirectly the justification—if there can be a justification for murder.

For it was murder that he wished to confess, the massed murder of women innocent of all but unwitting obstruction to the realization of the Anarchist State that this brutal dreamer wished to create for the world.

This same day the man with whom I was talking had ordered, and himself attended, the execution of 250 women—bound, lined up, and machine-gunned.

Terror gripped my mind at what this man had done but, underlying it, there was something like sympathy

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

for the agony that he was suffering for having done it.

With the uncontrolled hordes of men that had been swept off to the front to fight against Franco and Fascism (it was only those who were sincere that had gone to the front, the lip servers contenting themselves with profitable political murdering in the comparative safety of the city), had gone a number of half-crazed women—the milicianas. Most of them were drawn from the gutters of the city, half believing in a new heaven and a new earth, half intoxicated by so much desirable and desiring masculinity—the direct descendents of the camp followers of every medieval campaign.

With them, inevitably had gone disease. Durruti, on his latest tour of inspection at the front, had found half his men rotten with venereal disease, and the other half bound for the same fate. Reason, with blood-crazed men, was useless, and yet, if the women remained, the morale of the whole anti-Fascist army must rot and fail. To remove the women by force would have meant revolt, and so, after a terrible struggle with himself, Durruti had made his decision. The women were given a week's leave, and 250 of

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

those known to be ill were loaded into lorries which the men were told were bound for Barcelona. Had they, in fact, been going on leave to Barcelona most of them would somehow have found their way back to the men, so forty miles outside the city the lorries had been driven into a closed courtyard. There the women were machine-gunned at his orders. It was nearly a quarter of an hour until the last had been silenced. Their murderer, tortured by what he had seen and heard, was before me now.

Horror at the crime, and the immense sense of futility which always overwhelms anyone seeking to understand the motives of another, now rendered me helpless. Viva Villa began again his rather childish fooling, with bitter misery for his master's unhappiness in his stupid doggy eyes, and I slipped away, feeling hopelessly inadequate and disgusted, horrified and yet somehow pitiful.

A few months later Durruti was shot in the back in Madrid, Viva Villa at his side. With his death ended all possibility that from the Anarchist revolt might develop something which, though terrible, might have meant something to the world. From now on, until

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the Red Terror ended and Negrin took over control, the direction of affairs fell into the hands of little, cheap, self-seeking men, like Garcia Oliver and Companys, politicians and tricksters. The only giant, even though he may have been a monster, had gone the way of the mammoth into the violent and bloody oblivion of the past.

Newspaper men from all over the world were gradually gathering in force, having realized that this was something more important than any of the violent upheavals that had gone before. Among them came Walter Duranty, of the *New York Times*, looking like an intelligent gnome, whom I had not met before, but whom I was to know very much better four years later in Rumania and Bulgaria.

All the hotels had been shut to serve as quarters for the milicianas, and poor Walter, like the Son of Man, had not where to lay his head; so I loaned him a room in the house of an Englishman who had asked me to take it over from him as a protection against seizure.

Those who have not heard Duranty talk do not know what conversation can be. Records suggest that

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the art of conversation reached its highest peak at the end of the eighteenth century, and, if that is so, Walter is most surely a throwback to the Regency period. As a boy I heard quite a lot of brilliant men talk, including such people as G. K. Chesterton, C. F. G. Masterman, and the late Lord Birkenhead, all masters of the art in their very different ways, but all just a little overwhelming unless you happened to be feeling on your mettle. The special quality of Duranty's brilliance is that he contrives to make you feel that you are almost equally good yourself.

He happens to be, in my opinion, one of the very few really great journalists, but I always suspect that to him journalism is a side line, and that his great work in life is conversation.

The first excitement of the revolution having slightly subsided, I felt that it was the moment to make a flying visit to London, to put my affairs in order—or at least as nearly in order as they ever seem likely to be.

I decided to travel by the unfashionable route that runs due north from Barcelona to Toulouse through the heart of the Pyrenees. The track rises to some

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

four thousand feet, making the journey a cooler one than the coast line, and passes through extremely beautiful country.

The frontier is at an attractive little town called Puigcerda, set in a wide valley, where I had once spent a particularly peaceful holiday. The train descends from among high mountains into this valley, the town itself being set upon a spur, towering above the station. From it I used to walk across the valley into France at La Tour de Carol, four miles away, where the railway track once more climbs steeply, through incredible gorges, to Ax-les-Thermes, before it finally descends to the ancient fortress town of Foix. Everywhere in summer is the sound of running water, and the trees and flowers are of a kind that belong more properly to England than to Spain.

Only a few miles away is the semi-independent country of Andorra, where the population live chiefly by smuggling, and where, a few months earlier, they too had had a "revolution." A journalist friend of mine, with a long experience of such things, could not, in the course of two weeks, discover exactly what this revolution was about, nor, in fact, which

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

side was which. Apparently no one was hurt, and the people went on living in exactly the same way after it as they had done before. Any attempt to elucidate what it had all been about produced floods of explanatory Basque on the feudal rights of pasturage, or some equally abstruse subject, so that finally he had left hastily in order to preserve his reason, and sent his papers a nice, bright story about sturdy mountaineers, robber bands, and scenery which delighted them, but did little to throw light upon the causes of the "revolution." I liked to think that probably the Spanish Bishop of Urgel and the President of France, who are Andorra's joint rulers, were equally unsuccessful in finding out what it had all been about.

The usually sleepy frontier guards, entrusted with the control of this little-used line, had been reinforced since I had last passed this way, as the route had been successfully employed by a considerable number of escaping Fascists during the early days of the Terror. Inside the tiny waiting room were five "suspects" upon whose faces there was a peculiar inward look. I inquired why they were being held instead of either

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

being arrested or released, especially as I learned that no valuables nor anything incriminating had been found upon them during their search. It appeared that, in order to make absolutely sure, the authorities had given them all a large dose of castor oil. If the results of this proved that they had not swallowed any jewelry, then they would be allowed to pass unhindered upon their way into France.

Was the inward look that I had noticed due to a realization that only a determined constipation could save the family fortune, or to the natural pangs induced by the dose?

Brutal though such methods may seem there was some slight justification in the fact that vast quantities of national wealth were being smuggled out of the country almost daily by such strange methods. An acquaintance of my own got out some valuable diamonds by having holes drilled in his teeth and the stones placed inside the cavities before being sealed up again, ready for the journey out of Spain.

Small fortunes, too, were being made by foreigners with dollars or pounds at their disposal. The official rate of exchange for the peseta had changed very

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

little, but a "black bourse" had grown up for reliable foreign currencies, either in notes or, better still, out of the country, owing to the eagerness of Franco supporters to get their wealth into something else than the Government pesetas which were being printed as fast as the presses could turn them out, and upon this something like five times the official rate could be obtained. The prices of jewelry and gold, on the other hand, had remained "pegged" to the official rate, so that with these cheap pesetas a jewel worth, for example, five hundred pounds could be bought for one hundred, and, if smuggled safely out of the country, could be resold in London, Paris, or New York, only a few weeks later, for its true value.

As is always the case with me when such an opportunity presents itself, I had no capital, and so was able to express suitable sentiments of shocked disapproval of such wicked practices.

My very few friends in London received me kindly, but were clearly puzzled when I expressed my intention of returning to Spain. My suggestion that events there would have a direct influence before

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

long upon their own lives was treated with the obvious forbearance usually accorded to the harmlessly insane. Somehow I found myself slightly outside the interests and amusements that had formerly seemed so satisfying, and it was with something nearer to relief than to regret that I began my return journey.

Drinks in the Champs Elysées in Paris during a Front Populaire riot, during which tables and chairs were smashed and bricks whistled through the café windows, suggested that it was not only in Barcelona that excitement was to be found, but I still decided in favor of the night train for Toulouse.

Tired and dirty I stepped off the train at Barcelona some thirty-six hours after leaving Paris, having paused in Toulouse for half a day, thinking kindly only of a bath and a shave. I was not, therefore, in at all the right mood for confronting immediate and pressing danger.

As I walked along the platform toward the exit a man, whom I recognized, approached me. After looking round quickly he said in English, "Don't go back to your flat. The F.A.I. gunmen were there last night,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and they are after you for your stuff about them in the *Daily Telegraph*. Your only chance is to go straight to the consulate, and ask them to put you on the next destroyer for Marseille."

After a few more words he walked off rapidly, leaving me feeling distinctly limp. I certainly would not go to the consulate, and give them the chance of saying, "We told you to leave the country but you refused, and now you expect us to help you," yet it seemed to be asking for trouble to return to my flat after this warning, since I knew that the man who had given it to me was completely reliable. Hiding, for more than a day or two, was out of the question as foreigners had to register with the police wherever they are staying and the Anarchist gunmen certainly had access to any police information. Appeal to the official authorities was simply a waste of time, since they themselves stood in mortal terror of the gunmen, and certainly would not earn dangerous unpopularity with them by attempting to protect a "Fascist" foreigner.

Clearly the situation required some careful thought, and, as I could almost certainly count upon at least

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

twenty-four hours before the Syndicalists would know that I was back, I decided to go to an obscure hotel, with which I was not associated, and ponder at leisure.

Most problems are best resolved by verbal argument and discussion out loud, but my only companion was my old and exceedingly wise Shetland collie dog, whom I had collected in Paris from the friend with whom she had been parked during my short stay in England, a separation imposed by the ridiculous British regulations about quarantine.

In my bare and rather stuffy bedroom in a back street off the Ramblas, therefore, walking the ten feet backward and forward between the window and the door, I discoursed out loud, arguing the pros and cons of the situation to my only companion.

Outside was the deep murmurous chatter that swells up from the streets of any Spanish city as the light fades and people come out for their evening stroll.

Encouraged by knowledgable twitchings of the ear and waggings of the tail, combined with an occasional glance of unstinted admiration for my clo-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

quence on the part of my dog, I was soon able to work out some kind of a plan, and to sleep contentedly until in the morning I should have the opportunity to put it into execution.

Chapter III

THE Anarchist headquarters were in a huge requisitioned building in the Via Layetana, guarded by prominently displayed machine guns, which poked out of the windows of the second floor. To this place, therefore, accompanied by my dog, I made my way after an early breakfast, and, handing in my card which bore upon it "Special Correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*" under my name, I asked the stubble-bearded villain who barred my way with his rifle to take it to the boss.

After a long pause another man came back and asked me in, and after leading me along seemingly endless passages, showed me into a large officelike room, and told me curtly to wait. Half an hour later a strange man appeared with my card in his hand, and looked at me curiously.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"You are the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent," he asked, "and you wish to see the boss?"

I replied that he was correct, whereupon, with obvious meaning he said, "Well I know that he has been wanting to see you for some days."

"In that case," I replied, "I suppose that I may reasonably hope that I shall not be subjected to much more unnecessary delay."

He looked at me hard and went out, returning after a brief moment to usher me into the next room, where a short, bearded man, bullet-headed and wearing spectacles, was sitting at a desk loaded with papers, among which I observed some newspaper cuttings, obviously from the *Daily Telegraph*. Within easy reach of his right hand was a heavy revolver.

He continued reading and, as he showed no sign of being aware of my existence, I walked across to his desk and sat down opposite to him. He seemed a little surprised at my action, and still more so by the presence of my dog, and said:

"You are the *Daily Telegraph* correspondent?" to which I replied in the affirmative.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"Why do you bring a dog here?" he demanded abruptly.

"Don't worry about her," I said. "She is a good anti-Fascist. The only time she ever gives the Fascist salute is with her hind leg against a lamppost."

A look of amazement was succeeded by something approaching an unwilling smile, instantly suppressed. After a short silence he said:

"Your paper is a supporter of the Franco rebels?"

"Not at all," I replied. "It was unfavorable to the mob excesses of the first few days, but now that people like yourself have taken control there will be no more reason for it to write in that strain—I hope."

That didn't go so well. "You have been writing violently anti-Anarchist articles from here, and smuggling them out of the country," he accused me in a hard tone.

"How could I?" I replied. "I have been in London for the last week," and I handed across my passport, showing that I had entered the country the previous day. He turned its pages slowly, and then said:

"But you were here before that, and the articles to which we most strongly object include the period

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

between July the nineteenth and the date of your departure."

"Quite possibly," I replied, "but I only received my appointment as *Daily Telegraph* correspondent during my visit to London," and I handed him a letter from the managing editor, dated August 17. Before he could speak again I went on:

"I have read the articles to which you object, and I don't blame you for objecting to them. One of the principal reasons for my visit to London was to represent to the *Daily Telegraph* that their correspondent's attitude toward the Government cause was not impartial. As their new representative here I am sure that all that I shall see and hear and," with slight emphasis, "the way in which I am treated, will enable me to write in a very different tone from that adopted in these articles."

"Then you did not write them," he asked, in obvious surprise.

"Clearly they are not the type of stuff anyone in their right mind would write who intended to live and work here, as I do," I replied truthfully.

"But who did write them then?" he asked.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"There are a large number of British subjects who have left the country in the last month," I replied very seriously, "and they left, I suspect, because they are Fascist sympathizers. Any one of them might have written these articles, and got paid for them. All that is certain is that I have arranged that in future nothing that does not come from myself will be published from Barcelona, and I think you will find that, assuming that I am given the courteous treatment which any friend of the fight against Fascism deserves, no such attacks will appear in future. I have called upon you like this, immediately upon my arrival, to assure you that I represent a very different attitude from that possessed by my predecessor."

His whole manner changed. "It is a very good thing that you did call," he said, "otherwise a most regrettable incident might have arisen."

I know just what kind of regrettable incident he was thinking about but contrived to look politely puzzled.

"Incident," I said, "I don't think I quite ——"

"Nothing," he said, a trifle hastily, "nothing that need concern you now that we have cleared up the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

misunderstanding. We are most anxious to be on good terms with the British, American, and French press."

We chatted amiably for a few minutes, while he outlined the type of cruel, harsh untruths that were getting the anti-Fascist's cause such a bad name abroad—such as that priests and nuns had been killed and tortured. Warming to his subjects he picked up the newspaper cuttings from his desk and began to read.

For nearly a quarter of an hour I listened with deep satisfaction to a reading of my own dispatches; in which I had called the party of which the reader was the local leader some pretty hard names, praising God that the *Daily Telegraph* had not given me a by-line, but remembering, after a particularly juicy passage, to interject an occasional, "How monstrous," or "But that's untrue," or "The man doesn't know what he is talking about."

We parted the best of friends, and I made my way round to the British Club, feeling that I had earned a couple of quick ones, and not forgetting to order a small glass of port for the dog in recognition of her assistance.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

For the moment at least I had nothing to fear from the Anarchists. I was not, however, destined to stay out of trouble for long.

Many nuns who had fled from their sacked convents had found ordinary clothes, and were seeking for shelter and protection as servants. Their disguise nearly always failed because of the peculiar dead quality of their hair, due, I suppose, to its having been for so long covered from the sun and air. In addition, and for the same reason, their skins were paler, less sunburned, and beyond such obvious things there is always an indefinable other-worldliness about anyone who has lived for years in cloistered seclusion. Recognition for what they were still meant almost certain death from the madly anti-clerical mob, and their plight was especially pitiable as, unlike some of the high male dignitaries of the Church in Spain, they knew nothing of politics and had often lived lives of extreme worthiness in nursing and charity.

Late one evening two of these unhappy women arrived at the flat where I was living, and begged for work as servants. One of them was a tough old dame of 50, the other her niece, a very pretty girl in the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

late teens. I asked them in, and told them frankly that I knew that they were from a convent, and that I wished to help them. After a pitiful effort at denial they admitted it, and I assured them that if they did as I told them I could almost certainly help them to escape from the country, and to Italy, where their Order would take care of them.

Cutting short the tears and thanks I made one stipulation: that if I sheltered them they must hand over to me all religious emblems that they had on their persons or in their bundles of luggage, so that if the house was searched nothing would give the lie to my assertion that they were, in fact, servants. After a slight but perceptible pause they agreed, and presented me with two small silver crucifixes. After dark on the next day, when they were both out for half an hour's air and exercise in the secluded street behind my flat, I remembered the pause that had followed my request for the surrender of all religious emblems and, on impulse, went up to the room where they had slept, and quietly and systematically went through their belongings.

I found two statuettes of the Virgin and Child,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

four rosaries, and two prayer books—enough to have had us all hanged, drawn, and quartered by any Anarchist search party. All these things I buried in the garden. Neither myself nor my guests ever made any reference to their sudden disappearance.

Then began an anxious and tricky period of negotiation, with a view to arranging to get my two “servants” on board H.M.S. *Shropshire*, the British cruiser then in Barcelona harbor, from whence they would be transferred to a destroyer and taken to Marseille en route for Italy.

I had no confidence in the consul general, who had repeatedly shown himself so openly hostile to the existing regime that his usefulness in such matters was restricted owing to the closeness with which his every movement was now watched. The Navy would have been helpful enough, but precisely in order to stop the flow of escapes through their agency, no one was now allowed within a quarter of a mile of their dock. Shore leave had been stopped for officers and men alike, owing to the dangerous state of the streets. Only the captain drove daily in the consul's car straight to the consulate building for

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the conduct of official business, and then straight back again, closely watched on both journeys by dozens of police spies.

I finally discovered that a scheme was on foot whereby films were to be sent on board the *Shropshire* to keep the men amused during this long period when shore leave was impossible, and I managed to get myself included in the captain's invitation to dine on board which he sent as a token of gratitude to the manager of the film company.

Assisted, therefore, by a version of *The Ghost Goes West*, I at last succeeded in establishing contact, and took the opportunity to make all the necessary arrangements for smuggling my two dangerous guests on board in three days' time.

I left early as I had work to do and a four-mile walk home, since there was still no means of transport. I paused a quarter of a mile up the road from the docks and looked back. From the brightly lighted ship I could clearly hear the dialogue of the film, still showing in the improvised cinema on deck, and the occasional gusts of laughter from the audience. Ahead of me the city lay black, deserted, and quite

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

silent except for the occasional crack of a rifle shot as some poor wretch paid the price for real or fancied Fascist or religious leanings, or for the simpler sin of possessing desirable property. That other world that I had just left seemed so safe and sane—but safe for how long unless it could be awakened to realities?

During the next days I was pretty uneasy, and spent a particularly unpleasant two hours after midnight on the second night of waiting, while a party of drunken Anarchists searched a house opposite, and after dragging out the owner and his wife and daughter, flung them in the gutter and there clubbed their heads into a jelly with the butts of the guns. Their bodies lay putrefying in the blazing sun during the following twenty-four hours. Their crime, I discovered, had been the possession of a dress suit and top hat—clear enough proof in those days of capitalistic sympathies.

Zero hour was fixed for 8 P.M. on the third day after my visit to the *Shropshire*, that being the hour when I could turn over my charges to those who would take them aboard; but at about noon I received

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

a warning that the P.O.U.M. (Trotskyist party) had got wind of my "servants" and were planning to search my flat during the afternoon.

I cudgeled my brains for somewhere to hide them, but without success. The cinemas had been shut since the revolution had begun. Their appearance, for reasons already given, made it impossible just to walk them about the town. To take them to the house of any friend would merely have been to have added that friend also to the list of those in danger.

Walking slowly up the Paseo de Gracia the inspiration struck me suddenly, and I dived into a fashionable shop, emerging a few minutes later with two Jantzen bathing costumes of the latest, rather skimpy, design.

Returning to the flat I began the really hard part of my task, namely that of persuading the elder of the women of the necessity for appearing in public so lightly clad. The young niece fairly quickly entered into the spirit of the thing, and it was she who finally won over her aunt, when all my own threats and pleadings had failed. Even with almost certain death as the alternative, and all my persuasive elo-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

quence, I think that the old lady would rather have stayed where she was and faced the music.

Before they had time to change their minds I hustled them off to the popular bathing beach where the almost naked bodies of some thousand more or less militant anti-clericals were disporting themselves in the Mediterranean, and there passed the critical hours until I was rid of my responsibility.

I returned with a lighter heart to face the inevitable trouble awaiting me. Sure enough three bearded toughs, armed with rifles, were waiting on my doorstep, and on seeing me demanded that they should enter and search the house.

I pointed out that there would probably be trouble for them for forcing their way onto British-owned premises, but after registering suitable reluctance I opened the door. Immediately two of them pushed past me, and began a search of the upstairs rooms, while the third followed me into the sitting room. I ignored him, and after mixing myself a whisky and soda, sat down at my typewriter and began a letter.

"What are you writing?" demanded my companion.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"A letter of complaint to Comrade Nin about your conduct," I replied. "Will you please give me your name and that of the other two men, as I want to make sure that I spell them right."

He mumbled something clearly of an impolite nature, and stamped off upstairs. After a few minutes they all came down, having finished their search, and I asked politely:

"Well, did you find anything interesting? Any machine guns, Fascist literature, or perhaps some of the Franco family? They always sleep in the attic whenever they stay with me."

The leader grinned feebly and said, "We were looking for nuns—Fascist agents."

I contrived to look surprised. "Nuns," I said. "Good God, man, do I look like a mother superior?" A definite titter rewarded my somewhat obvious efforts at humor.

"We were told that there were two here," one of them explained.

"Two," I replied; "what would I want with two women? But you are welcome to any nuns that you can find here."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"There have been women in the house," said the one that had spoken last. "Look at these," and he thrust three hairpins under my nose.

"Oh, that?" I said carelessly. "Since when has there been a law in Spain against having a woman to spend the night? I never heard that your party had any objections to a man passing the time as best he may," and added, "Well if I can't provide you with any 'nuns' as you call them at least we might have a drink to the Frente Popular," and I slopped three big ones into tumblers and pushed across the soda siphon.

After an almost imperceptible pause the drinks went down, followed by another, and the rest was easy. I was even persuaded to tear up the letter of complaint to Comrade Nin, which, of course, I had never intended to send, and we parted almost affectionately after I had been shown photographs of their "novias" or "queridas," and had complimented them on their excellent taste in girl friends.

Then, as repeatedly later, I was impressed with the essential friendliness of reputed killers if once you could get below the crust of idiotic political jargon,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

which had been superimposed upon their only half-understanding minds.

Against this background of purely personal adventures, events in Spain were moving fast.

Franco had succeeded in getting a considerable force of Moors across the Straits from Morocco, and these born fighters swept irresistibly up through Seville under the bucolic General Quiapo de Llano, and north toward Madrid. The intense wave of bitterness that swept the Government side at this use of Moors against Spaniards was rooted in the memory of the long and bitter struggle, only ending in the fifteenth century, that had been needed in order to expel them, a memory that still lives even after the intervening five hundred years. In addition Franco had the use of 85 per cent of the regular army, with such equipment as the nation had possessed at the time of the outbreak of hostilities, 80 per cent of the Civil Guard, and the backing of the great landed nobles, like the Duke of Alba, who saw in him at least a lesser evil than the wild men who had taken over the Republic. They still hoped that one day Franco would restore the monarchy—a delusive hope

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

that Franco was very careful to foster until he was finally victorious.

He had, too, the full backing, both moral and financial, of the Church, whose influence still counts for a great deal in Spain, and behind all this he possessed the tremendous knowledge that the forces of Mussolini and Hitler were gathering at his back.

To oppose to all this the Government had little but the support of lawless mobs of the great cities, Madrid, Barcelona, Bilbao, and Valencia, backed by the gold in the vaults of the National Bank, that gold which dated from the days of Spain's greatness in the sixteenth century, and which despite two hundred and fifty years of bad government had never entirely disappeared. The excessive zeal of the mob with their infinity of dangerous private squabbles was, at this time at least, more of an embarrassment than an asset. A far greater weapon should have been the fact that they were unquestionably the only lawfully elected Government of Spain, fighting against a military uprising, but the British and French official attitudes almost at once revealed that this was not to be allowed to rank as the asset it should have been.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Even all these years afterward, knowing now how great was our need then to avoid war, it is difficult to understand the attitude of England and France toward Spain in those days, when the present war was being fought out in miniature.

Non-intervention was what we sought to achieve. Legally and morally our obligation was to allow help to reach any lawfully constituted Government, or at least to allow it to obtain by purchase the means to put down a rebellion. Practically it was obvious that a victory for the Fascist forces in Spain must be against our vital interests.

Ignoring the legal, moral, and practical considerations, however, we decided upon non-intervention. All right—that is the decision. We will not intervene, nor allow others to do so. But, no, that is far too definite. A formula can be found if only we can explore enough avenues and leave sufficiently few stones unturned. God bless the good old Formula that has made the British Empire what it is—or does one say was?

Wise heads are put together. Sane and comfortable words are spoken in some solidly furnished room by

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

solidly furnished men in distant and tranquil London—words unhampered by the petty restrictions that might have been imposed had the speakers possessed even a journalist's knowledge of the real situation.

A Formula is found. Old traditions of Diplomacy, founded upon a good solid basis of Old School Tie, and, apparently, imbued with the spirit of Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, have triumphed once again.

"Let's fool everyone," cry these gay Clubmen, momentarily almost forgetting their gout in the clean, boyish, light-hearted fun of the thing. "Let us fool everyone, by helping both sides—but helping them both insufficiently for either to win. In this way we can prolong the affair almost indefinitely. We will help the Reds with obsolete stuff from France for which we will make them pay through the nose in good Spanish gold. Simultaneously we will let Germany and Italy use up their good war material in helping Franco so as to make it sporting (it would hardly be cricket if only one side got helped). Nevertheless we must not commit ourselves too heavily. We must provide against the danger of getting in on

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the winning side. We will help the Reds only a very little so that, if they win, England will be loathed and execrated by the Spanish Government for her grudging, profiteering assistance. But what if Franco should win? Well, we will help the Government just enough to make Franco angry, and to lend truth to his charges that Britain by this help has prolonged the war, and so been guilty of thousands of Spanish deaths. Then, if Franco wins, England will also be loathed and execrated by the new Spanish Government."

"Let's toss for it, with these infernal Fascists. Heads they win; tails we lose. Well, well, it was just bad luck that we lost."

And the Old School Ties flew in the sunshine,
And shook till their colors gleamed,
While on Front Bench or leather chair
Ministers smiled and dreamed.

Let us leave this idyll of Old England, before we start sticking straw in our hair.

The penance for this senile fooling has been paid in the ashes of London and Coventry, in the tears and bitterness of France, in the starvation and agony

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of occupied Europe. For another three years these old gentlemen were to continue to play their little games of Hunt the Holocaust, keeping the world ignorant of the truth by every artifice they knew, even including, during 1937 and 1938, an indirect censorship of the British press. If any good thing can come out of war, then perhaps the passing of these Old Gentlemen and their boyish pranks with other people's lives is this war's justification.

But Russia was outside all this. Could she not have influenced events? Geographically it was difficult, and for some strange reason she too seemed anxious to avoid committing herself.

Russian influence was strong behind the scenes, and was to become stronger, but it was always hidden from the world, half hidden even to those like myself in touch with, and closely observant of, events. Key positions were in the hands of Communists, a few of them actually Russians, but all of them directly trained or controlled by Russia. But of open practical help there was little enough. A wing of fighter planes with Russian pilots in Madrid, a few boatloads of indifferent food stuffs, petrol, and oil, which was

T R Y - O U T I N S P A I N

supplied impartially to Franco's side as well, and a vast mass of propaganda—millions of pages of doctrinaire tripe that flooded town, village, and individual house. A mass of words and ideas when guns, planes, and food were so desperately needed.

Germany and Italy sent Franco the guns, planes, and men. Russia sent the Government propaganda. Britain and France sent them a little obsolete stuff judged too out of date greatly to affect the situation.

But although this was all that the governments of the anti-Fascist countries would do, the people whom those governments claimed to represent would not leave it at that. Overcoming every kind of official and practical obstacle a steady stream of British, Americans, Poles, French, Jews, and Czechs found their way into Government Spain to form the International Brigade that was to bear the main brunt of the fighting against Franco until, under Negrin in 1938, the Government had built up its own army. Then, true to their principles, the Government, despite their precarious military situation, sent over fifteen thousand veteran fighting men back to their own countries. From then on only Spaniards fought

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

for the Government cause, while in the ranks of Franco's self-styled "nationalists" were Moors, Germans, Italians, Portuguese, and even Irish to a combined total greater than the number of Spaniards in the actual fighting line.

These men of the International Brigade saw more clearly than did their own governments that the Republican cause, right or wrong, was their own; that if Franco won, their own countries must be the ultimate losers.

From city workshop, prison, and university they came—against the orders of their government, secretly, at their own expense or helped by local anti-Fascist organizations, and a tougher, stranger crowd the world has probably not seen since the gold rushes of the last century. Until Spain could find within itself the resources to oppose Franco and his allies these men were to be the spearhead of the resistance paying for the privilege with something over a 50 per cent mortality.

The political setup was clearly such that from the beginning the ultimate outcome was foreordained. Some 65 per cent of the Spanish people did not, and

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

still do not, want Franco, which is another way of saying that when the war spread to the rest of the world 65 per cent of the Spanish people would rather have assisted us than our enemies; but England and France ensured that after the payment of a terrible price—no less than the sacrifice of an entire male generation—they were to have Franco, Germany, and Italy for their masters.

The miraculous resistance of the Spanish people to the iniquity of intervention under the title of non-intervention was to crystallize only later, under Negrin. Now in the autumn of 1936 there was, apart from the International Brigade, only a burning confusion of conflicting and impractical ideals to oppose to the Rebels, and Franco was wasting no time.

His forces under Quiapo de Llano had forced their way, with great difficulty, into Seville. From there the "Radio General" was to begin that series of broadcasts that was to earn for him the position of the most hated man in Republican Spain—far more hated than Franco himself, whose chubby features do not lend themselves to the cartoonist's pen. Ridicule is the one thing that no Spaniard can stand, and Quiapo de

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Llano was a master of the art in the Spanish style. Although his gibes would have left any Anglo-Saxon audience merely a little puzzled, it succeeded in driving even highly educated Spaniards into a blasphemous frenzy. His favorite weapons were the unfailing ones, with Latins, of throwing doubt upon their personal courage and sexual capacities, two subjects upon which a Spaniard is as devoid of humor as an unattractive spinster is about her virginity.

While the bibulous Radio General tightened his grip on Andalucia, and prepared for his drive up the coast to Malaga, General Mola, bespectacled and studious and by far the ablest of Franco's leaders since the death, in a flying accident on the opening day of the revolution, of General Sanjurjo, swept on, apparently irresistible, toward Madrid. By October he had the capital under shellfire, and, by pushing on round it to complete its encirclement, cut its sole remaining life line, the road to Valencia. Attempts to cut this road, and the bitter Republican resistance to these attempts, were the motive behind some of the fiercest fighting of the whole war, but the road re-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

mained uncut even on the day of the Government's final collapse in March, 1939.

But at that moment, in October, 1936, it seemed that the capital must fall. The Government of Largo Caballero, together with green-faced, immeasurably brilliant, President Azaña, fled to Valencia, escaping capture by the narrowest of margins.

Mola, with four converging columns summoned the town by radio to surrender, and in that speech coined a phrase that has now become so completely a part of the world's language that most people have forgotten how recent is its origin. He said, "True I have only four columns outside this city of more than a million souls, but I am relying upon my fifth column, which is already inside, to bring me victory."

So the world, for the first time, heard of the fifth column—and has been discovering new ones ever since.

But Mola's speech only produced a wave of panic slaughter inside the city, ten times worse than the Paris September Massacres of 1792, as the Anarcho-syndicalists sought to wipe out all possible adherents to this unseen fifth column. Sixty-five thousand were

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

massacred in a few weeks as the result of Mola's boast, and the city grimly prepared itself for its long siege.

One picturesque incident gave the Government time to rush up a couple of divisions of the International Brigade, and so to save Madrid.

The siege of the Alcazar in Toledo had in it some dramatic quality that appealed to the imagination of the whole world. Within those six-foot-thick walls a few hundred Fascists, their wives and children with them inside the old fortress, held out against greatly superior Government forces for week after week, under conditions of indescribable horror. Mola paused to relieve this heroic force, and lost ten days in doing so. In those ten days Madrid was reinforced. The force besieged in the Alcazar was without any military importance whatever, however great its sentimental significance might have been. If Mola had left it to its fate he would, almost certainly, have taken Madrid, and the war would have lasted six months instead of over two and a half years.

While all this was going on in Spain I remained far from the scene of action in Cataluña. There things were rushing toward a disastrous Anarchistic chaos

T R Y - O U T I N S P A I N

with a sickening speed. Nowhere was there any kind of direction or authority. Different shades of anti-Fascist belief were busy killing one another over trivial divergences of political theory with a complete disregard for essentials, in rather the same way as, in the Middle Ages, people were burned alive over such questions as whether you should worship your God with or without candles on the altar.

Officially the Catalan government functioned as a separate autonomous body from the rest of Spain, and at its head was President Companys. In point of fact all real power was already in the hands of the two big trade-unions, the Confederacion Nacional de Trabajadores (National Workers Union), and the more moderate Union General de Trabajadores, and these, from behind the presidential chair, were responsible for an endless stream of utterly impracticable decrees that flowed unceasingly from the Generalidad, where the president held his court.

A slick little lawyer, with a die-away chin, shifty eyes, and the most movingly beautiful speaking voice, Companys was uneasily riding the trade-unionist whirlwind. He had been president of the short-lived

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Catalan Republic when Cataluña sought to break away from Spain in October, 1934, and had spent the intervening period in prison—like most Spanish politicians when out of power.

Cataluña, the richest industrial province in Spain, a separate people with an entirely distinct language, had always sought to break away; and since without her Spain is not a complete economic unit, such separation had always been violently opposed by the rest of the country. Now, at last, Cataluña was governed, if such a word can be applied, from Barcelona, and not from Madrid. Companys, however, with no qualities beyond opportunism, unscrupulousness, and a capacity for appealing to the Catalan mob in its own tongue, found himself quite unable to arrest the rising tide of anarchy, and concentrated all his considerable power of adroitness and low cunning in avoiding a clash with the trade-unionists or, as they came to be called, Anarchosyndicalists. Such a clash, he knew, would almost certainly have meant his own death.

Although shrewd enough to know that the decrees that he was forced to sign must inevitably plunge Cataluña into speedy bankruptcy and utter chaos, he

TRY - O U T I N S P A I N

continued to sign on the dotted line, and so performed the valuable task of hurrying on the crisis when Cataluña must be taken over, lock, stock, and barrel, by the Madrid Government, and so brought into the national war effort.

Local "Soviets" were springing up like mushrooms overnight, and small towns and even villages decided to issue their own fifty-centimo and one-peseta notes. Naturally the note of one village was unacceptable, five miles along the road, in the next.

I made a collection of some hundreds of these notes, which I still have by me, and they bring back to me extraordinarily clearly the memory of that odd period at the end of 1936 and beginning of 1937. All of them are signed by the alcade, or mayor, of the town or village, and one of them, the pearl of my collection, by a cross, as the mayor was unable to write.

The peak of absurdity was reached when certain villages, styling themselves "Independent Soviets," began to set up customs barriers with taxes for travelers.

The whole of Cataluña was still far more concerned with the theory of their different brands of anti-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Fascism than they were with such uncomfortable work as fighting to beat Franco. The nearest front was at Huesca, a hundred and fifty miles away in Aragon, outside the borders of Cataluña, and the air raids had not yet begun. The disastrous fiasco of the attempted invasion of the Franco-held island of Majorca was soon forgotten, and effectively silenced those few who genuinely wished to get to grips with the enemy.

All serious observers realized that such a state of affairs could not continue much longer, but for the moment there was still plenty of easy loot and old grudges to pay off under the all-concealing cloak of "suspected Fascist sympathies."

The only thing that occasionally brought the reality of war briefly to the notice of those engaged in this pleasant chaotic orgy was the *Canarias*.

This modern, British-built cruiser, belonging to Franco, used to put in an occasional appearance, and from some five miles away proceed to lob a few dozen eight-inch shells into the heart of the city.

I still remember my surprise, when walking along Calle Cortes one day, when I heard a noise overhead

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

like a cut between a banshee and an express train, and a moment later observed a large palm tree, which bordered the road, suddenly hurtled into the air leaving only a blazing stump. The next shell hit the road just in front of a large apartment house a hundred yards away, and round this a small crowd rapidly gathered.

A young woman who had been sitting on a stool by the open door, nursing her five-week-old baby upon her knee, had been hit. A fragment of shell had carried away her left breast and the child from her arms. The woman lived, but the child was nothing but a formless smear of flesh and clothes on the stone wall of the room ten feet away.

But despite such hideous incidents the actual effects of this sporadic shelling were slight. The moral effects, however, were greater than those produced by far more damaging air raids, and this I attribute to the noise—that dreadful hissing rush, like the wings of the Angel of Death himself, sweeping down upon you.

Although there was so much to see I felt myself in a backwater of the main struggle. Reason dictated

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

that I should leave Spain, and perhaps I should have done but for outside and personal events. News of my sister's sudden and tragic death within a few weeks of that of my grandfather at the age of 103—he remembered as a little boy once seeing Talleyrand—severed my two strongest ties with home. Almost simultaneously came the news that my wife had left me and was seeking a divorce.

I remember my very small son's parting promise on the docks of Barcelona, "I'll look after her for you, daddy." No doubt he had loyally tried, but he was so small a person at five years to have to fight on my behalf, alone against the ways of the world.

This left me very much alone. I had, through absence, grown away from what few friends I possessed. The brief, but very bitter, visit to England that I paid in connection with these three personal events, left me with a deep need for action if I was to avoid the tedium of self-pity. It seemed that it was best to submerge the loneliness that threatened by living as close as I could get to the immense tragedy of Spain, and I know, now, that I was right.

Chapter IV

THIS same feeling of restlessness and desire to be nearer to the heart of events decided me in February to travel more. I was, I felt, getting too local, too purely a Catalan, view of the war which, although interesting, was not representative.

Yet to decide to travel and actually to do so were two very different things, as all forms of transport and communications, for other than military purposes, had almost entirely ceased to exist. There was a train to Valencia once in a while, I was told in reply to inquiries, but there was no degree of certainty as to its arrival, as it rarely left with a sufficiency of fuel to accomplish the two hundred miles. With numerous stops to requisition wood, or any other available fuel, from its unwilling owners, it was

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

liable to take anything from eighteen to thirty-six hours on the way. There was no sleeping accommodation, of course, and since we were all so anxious these days to emphasize the equality of man only those who could *not* pay for their tickets were allowed to use the first-class carriages. Food *might* be available, but it was by no means certain.

However, I wanted to get away and this seemed the only means of doing so, and I accordingly wedged myself, with one small suitcase, aboard the train. There were no seats available, and in the corridors people were standing two deep. The only place I could find was a space opposite the lavatory door, where there was at least a window, and, by up-ending my suitcase in a corner to sit on I was not too uncomfortable.

We were, of course, hours late in starting. Occasional inquiries as to when we would be off merely produced interesting variations on the Spanish word "rato," which means "a time." To start with we were leaving in "un rato." That meant anything from an hour to a week. Forty minutes later it was "un ratito," which meant a little time—say anything

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

between a half and one hour. Half an hour later it had become "un ratitito," which really would be almost any minute.

Finally, after ringing bells, blowing whistles, shouting, and singing a patriotic song, we began to puff slowly south.

Soon we paused at my beloved little Sitges, where a lifetime ago—or to be exact, seven months before—someone with my appearance had lived a happy, lazy life. There on that magnificent sweep of golden sand I had passed so many days in a sun-filled Fool's Paradise, with nothing to do but watch my own body turning a deeper brown until the church on the headland reached out a slim purple finger to touch the little fishing village in an Angelus hour blessing.

The train bumped along again in time to an almost forgotten verse. What was it?

They told me Heraclytus, they told me you were
dead;

They brought me bitter news to hear, and bitter
tears to shed.

I wept when I remembered how often you and I
Had tired the sun with talking, and sent him down
the sky.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

But all that was a seven-months' lifetime ago, and I, for some inexplicable reason, was on a very uncomfortable train going to Valencia.

Late at night we pulled in to Tarragona, and by the mercy of God there was Paella Valenciana—rice, with tiny bits of prawn, rabbit, chicken, octopus tentacle (pulpos), tomato, pimienta, and Uncle Tom Cobbley and All, all served in the iron dish in which it is cooked. The octopus tentacles taste slightly like the inner tube of a bicycle tire, but the combined result is extremely agreeable.

Outside a man-sized portion of Paella Valenciana, therefore, and a large bottle of "vino corriente," costing the equivalent of two cents American, I returned, somewhat strengthened, to my suitcase for the night.

The healthy but inconvenient frequency with which my fellow passengers felt obliged to obey the calls of nature made sleep an impossibility, but the night outside my square of window was so beautiful that I did not mind. A vast silver bubble of a moon floated up slowly out of the sea and showed me olive groves and small sleeping villages that had not changed since Don Quixote went a-roaming.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

A gold and blue dawn revealed the town of Castellion de la Plana, and the fact that we should not arrive until late afternoon. Every tiny rise brought us to a gasping halt, and there we would remain while the engine panted asthmatically until such time as we had enough steam up to coax it into movement again.

Soon we came to the orange-growing district—endless miles of dark-green orange trees, with the fully ripe fruit perfuming the air. Every dried river bed was piled high with the rotting fruit, waiting for the spring rains to wash it out to sea. Millions upon millions of the finest oranges in the world rotting on the ground, because Franco's blockade made it impossible to export them; millions more rotting on the trees because the trade-union would not allow the pickers to accept their present wages for the work.

Thirty hours after leaving Barcelona we arrived in Valencia. Tired and bearded I sought a hotel—on foot, as there were no taxis—and finally found a cupboard-sized apartment in an establishment usually most inaccurately described as of "doubtful repute." Anyone in doubt about this one for more than five minutes would have had to have been unconscious.

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

This was my first black-out city, my first taste of real war conditions. The rebel mountain stronghold of Teruel was only seventy-five miles away, thrusting in a narrow funnel down into Republican territory. The streets were patrolled by armed men with a tendency to shoot first at any lights that were improperly showing, and to ask questions afterward.

Valencia was now the seat of Government, and, with Negrin in charge in place of the senile Caballero, there was a grim earnestness about the war which had been notably absent in Barcelona. Trade-unionist squabbles existed, but they were already being treated with very much less awe and respect than under Caballero.

I wanted to push on south as fast as possible as there were reports of a strong rebel drive up the coast from Seville by Quiepo de Llano toward Malaga. There were no trains nor possibility of hiring a car, but there was a daily bus service to Alicante one hundred miles on, and this I took.

Cutting across the back of the great headland of Calpe the climate changed in a few miles from temperate to subtropical. It had been pleasantly warm all

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the way from Barcelona, but here it was suddenly hot. Large groups of bathers lay basking in the February sun on the sandy beaches. Oranges and olive trees gave place to palms. Great cascades of bougainvillia poured its brilliant flowers across the white-walled houses.

The Victoria Hotel in Alicante had been slightly chipped by shellfire, but still had pleasant rooms looking out to sea. Anchored not so very far away was the reassuring bulk of the British battleship *Rodney*. In the consulate I met two officers from on board, who, learning that I was proposing to push on further south the next day, asked me to be sure to give them a report on conditions when I returned.

After almost interminable negotiations with the local trade-unionist organization, I succeeded in hiring a car upon the condition that one of their men should act as chauffeur, quite obviously in order to keep an eye upon me.

That evening I dined with the consul in his beautiful old house outside the town. His wife, who was kindness personified, was a living embodiment of Queen Victoria. She always spoke in the regal

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

plural. "We are pleased to see you," or "It is our wish that you should play chess with our husband." "For our own part we have a letter to write." With difficulty I refrained from kissing hands and walking out backward, but I spent a pleasant evening playing chess with the Prince Consort.

At 1.30 A.M. the next morning my driver and/or guard called for me, and we set off on our 350-mile trip—through Murcia to Almeria and back through the great naval base of Cartagena.

In each village, as the light strengthened, I noticed long queues of shrouded women's figures, already there for God alone knew how many hours, waiting for the inadequate rations of chickpeas and bread allowed to them by their husbands' trade-union co-operative store. Shapeless in their black head-dresses, they seemed to epitomize the tragic part of the women of Spain in this war—unceasing labor to scrape together enough food to enable their husbands to continue the task of making food ever scarcer, and their lives ever more grim.

Just outside Murcia a carload of obviously drunk milicianos literally drove us off the road and into the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ditch so that they might pass. My hitherto placid chauffeur became as one possessed. Unheeding my protests he drove like a madman until, at a police control on the outskirts of the town, he overtook the offenders. Leaping from his place he rushed forward and seized the driver by the arm. After a rising crescendo of "me cargo la Madre de Dios's," and "sin verguenza's," the driver of the other car drew his revolver and fired, almost at point-blank range, at my companion. One bullet crashed through the windscreen of the car not more than a foot from my head, and another bounced off the road to my right.

That made it a "free for all," with the police joining in with a fine show of impartiality on either side. Not more than five minutes later the two principals were crying in each other's arms, swearing eternal friendship. We all repaired to a neighboring fonda for drinks so that everyone could go anew over all the delightful details of the encounter, giving particular stress to the incredibly heroic behavior of all the participants.

"Que hombre," said my chauffeur admiringly, as he drove reluctantly away, "Que borracho." Trav-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

eling with the Latin temperament certainly ensures that there is never a dull moment.

As we drove into Almeria the air-raid sirens began to wail. A solitary plane, flying very high, slowly circled in the metallic blue sky, and then dropped five heavy bombs, making a shambles of a café in the main street. The 16-inch guns of the ancient battleship *Jaime Primo*, lying in the harbor, blazed away ineffectively, killing almost as many with falling shell fragments as did the bombs, but in no way inconveniencing the plane at 18,000 feet.

The news was that Quiapo de Llano was already in Malaga. Thousands of refugees were already pouring into the town in trucks, and many more were traveling up the coast by sea.

I watched them for half an hour. An old, old woman sat in the corner of an open truck, rocking herself to and fro, occasionally crying on a high keening note, like the Irish peasants mourning the dead. She had seen her husband and son bayoneted and her 16-year-old granddaughter raped by a whole company of Moors in turn. There was nothing useful

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to say or do in face of such grief but to hope that she too would soon die.

Late in the evening we reached Cartagena and here I saw, for the first time, the effect of massed raids. Vast holes were torn in the roads and half the houses of the town seemed to be in ruins.

Shortly after midnight we were back again in Alicante. Next morning early the first boatload of refugees arrived, packed like cattle, in an ancient 6000-ton cargo boat. None had been allowed to land when I arrived on the dock, only water was being carried on board in answer to the moaning cries of "Agua—agua."

The authorities could not get through to Madrid by telephone for permission to land them, but, as the sun got higher and hotter, it was agreed at least to let them stretch themselves on the docks. Almost at once the nature of their chief trouble became obvious. Seventy-five per cent of them were suffering from bleeding and torn feet—the consequences of having fled barefoot, or in their rope-soled "alpagatas," from the advancing Moors and Italians.

The little dispensary on the dock was quickly

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

crowded with patients—children whimpering as the festering skin was cleaned away from ragged and bruised sores, and women, stoically suffering the agony of iodine with the dumb fortitude of animals. Soon I found myself in the thick of it, dressing, probing, cleaning, and bandaging. I have little medical knowledge, but it was plain to see that there was only one danger here, with this type of wound, namely that of infection from dirt.

The room grew unbearably hot and thick with the reek of blood, pus and disinfectant, and I was glad when the stream of those needing attention began to thin out, and an officer from the *Rodney* arrived to take me on board to give my report to the captain of refugee conditions further south.

Here was a startling contrast from the dressing station. The huge, cool room in which we talked had a grand piano in one corner, fresh flowers in a Wedgwood bowl were reflected in its beautifully polished wooden surface.

It was decided that food and simple medical supplies were the chief necessity. A destroyer was signaled for, and two hours later it sped south toward

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Almeria, with all that could be found that might be of use.

Feeling a little comforted at having been responsible for the sending of at least a little help to those desperate men and women fleeing from Spanish Nationalists from Africa and Italy, I returned to the town to file my story to my paper, and continue my inquiries as to how I could get to Madrid.

With my usual luck a convoy of refugees had just arrived by car from the capital, in charge of a redoubtable lady wearing, rather surprisingly, a kilt. She was the head of a Scottish relief organization financed by a Glasgow millionaire who was presumably looking either for a barony or a credit balance in heaven. Hearing that I was a journalist she became most affable, and told me that she could provide me with transport to Madrid if I would report at the British embassy in Valencia in forty-eight hours' time.

She was as good as her word. I found the British chargé d'affaires, Mr. Ogilvie-Forbes, and his secretary, Mr. Thompson, whom I was to know far better four years later in Turkey as counsellor to our em-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

bassy in Ankara, about to begin a monumental tea of Scotch shortbread, and was requested to join them.

The lady of the kilt was in her element. Her presence in Spain on such a mission was obviously the great adventure of her fifty or so years of life. She had almost unlimited funds, the power to direct a small army of volunteer relief workers, *and* the embassy asked her to tea.

Her costume had caused one or two mildly unpleasant incidents. The sight of her plump legs protruding from her very short kilt had produced something very much like panic in small towns where an unchanging conservatism in relation to women's clothes has survived any number of changes of politics. But she was a stouthearted soul and saw nothing incongruous in her kilt, and refused to change it even after there was a spirited attempt to remove it by force in a small village where her appearance had apparently administered the coup de grace to a morale already rendered shaky by repeated bombardment. What was good enough for Scotland was most assuredly good enough for any damned foreigners.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

She was doing much good in her own way, but, as I was to learn, had a sneaking weakness for duchesses in distress in preference to these grubby villagers who were rude about her kilt. One of the advantages of being an aristocrat, of course, is that you can meet a kilt anywhere without turning a hair if there is anything to be gained by such fortitude.

Tactfully flattered by Ogilvie-Forbes, in whose eye I thought I detected a faint twinkle of carefully concealed amusement, the old girl was almost weeping with joy.

I was assigned the job of driving her in her own field ambulance, and as we left she turned to me with tears of pure sentiment in her eyes and murmured, presumably referring to his Britannic Majesty's representative in Spain, "A lovely man—such a lovely, lovely man," and blew her nose like a trumpet blast to hide her emotion.

The first part of our three-hundred-mile journey was largely uneventful, except when my companion insisted upon descending in small villages to "make an inspection." This she did by inquiring from bystanders as to local food conditions. Her only lan-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

guage, unfortunately, was English, though she was not adverse to raising her voice to make her meaning additionally clear. Unfortunately I knew enough Spanish to understand the comments of the locals upon the subject of their would-be benefactress. They were extremely apt, but tended to be a little on the broad side.

Beyond Chinchon, however, the main road was under shellfire, and we were forced to make a long detour in a network of small country lanes before coming out due east of Madrid at Alcala de Henares. It was dark, save for the occasional blaze of wrecked trucks, a strange sight to me in those days though one to become all too familiar before long in Poland and Burma.

The city itself was pitch black. We groped our way through streets that bore the marks of almost daily shelling or bombing for the past four months, and after disposing of my companion I secured a room in the one-time luxury Hotel Florida.

I was dog-tired but unable to sleep owing to a dim roaring noise from below, not unlike that to be heard in the Lion House at the Zoo, shortly before feeding

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

time. In desperation I rang and asked what caused this strange sound. That, I was told, was the Russian aviators having fun in the bar. Yes, to be sure, it always went on like that until dawn unless they drank more than usual, in which case they might fall asleep on the floors around 4 A.M.

Cotton wool in the ears did something toward shutting out the worst of the row, and I was just dropping off when there was a thunderous pounding of feet along the passage, the door was flung violently open, and a totally naked woman shot across the room, screaming shrilly, and locked herself into my bathroom. A gigantic male form, clad only in cotton shorts, followed, and howling like a madman in Russian, began pounding on the locked door.

It seemed that the Russian aviators did not confine their amusements to the bar. Switching on the lights I sat up in bed and said, "Good evening." My visitor paused for a moment, regarded me with obvious distaste, and then returned to pounding on the door.

The situation seemed to be getting slightly beyond me, so I climbed out of bed, and tapped my new acquaintance on the shoulder.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"Look," I said, gently, "I am the last person in the world to interfere with a little childish fun, but this is my room and I want to sleep. You, on the other hand, obviously have a number of things to do before you want to sleep. I equally obviously cannot sleep until you get your girl friend out of my bathroom. Therefore I am on your side. Let us," I concluded, "break down the door; it's so much quicker—and quieter."

The screams from within had ceased, presumably in order to hear what was being said. Immediately the door opened, and the refugee came out, looking as haughty as is possible to anyone entirely without clothes. She and the Russian exchanged a puzzled glance.

"This," said the Russian, "is intolerable."

"I entirely agree," I replied brightly.

"What in hell do you mean by interfering," demanded the lady.

"I was only trying to help," I protested, "by bringing matters to a happy, and, if possible, not too noisy, conclusion for you both."

"Sir," said the Russian, "I require no one's help."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Turning a little unsteadily, but with almost regal dignity, to his companion. "Querida, this man is no gentleman. We are not wanted. We will withdraw immediately." After a final glance of scorn they swept out, arm in arm, with the air of host and chief guest leading a formal party in to dinner.

Feeling that I had been guilty of a grave social blunder I climbed wearily back into bed, not forgetting, this time, to lock and bolt my door.

Such little pleasantries, however, were not typical. This was a city grimly in earnest. The sound of the guns, like the slamming of giant iron doors, was woven into the very texture of those days and nights. The enemy were actually on the outskirts of the town in the University City, where fierce fighting was taking place, only a tram ride from the Puerto del Sol.

From the higher floors of the immense telephone building the enemy lines could be clearly seen, a fact that may have accounted for the frequency with which it was hit by shellfire. A small shell had sailed through the seventh-floor window of the room assigned to the foreign correspondents only a few days

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

before. They had been moved to the fifth floor now, where only a week or two later another shell wrecked the floor. It almost seemed that Franco didn't like the foreign press.

With Sefton Delmar of the *Express* I went out to the University City front, where the Rebels had forced their way into the huge new buildings erected only a few years before by Alfonso XIII. Their advanced positions had only one line of supply—a mile-long covered trench—up which all food, ammunition, and reinforcements had to come up and wounded pass down. But, despite the slenderness of this supply line, all the Government's efforts to cut it had failed.

At the time of my visit, however, they had not given up hope, and a perfect inferno of rifle fire whizzed and pinged overhead as we were conducted through scarred and battered streets to the cellar headquarters of Lieutenant Colonel Ortega, who was in charge of the present attack.

Ortega received us with sherry and kind words, and the plentifulness of both suggested that he had no especial hope of anything of importance develop-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ing immediately. He it was who, almost exactly two years later, was to fly to Victoria from Madrid to beg Franco for terms of surrender.

The special foreign correspondents' table in the Grand Via Hotel was very much in the center of things. It had been discovered that the wine catalogue had been lost, and so everything was obtainable at the fixed price of five pesetas a bottle—about fifty cents American. A delightful game of Lucky Dip was the result. You paid your "duro" and then hoped for the best. You might get some undrinkable concoction, a bottle of cheap vermouth, or some superb vintage wine worth twenty dollars a bottle. As the hotel cellars had been among the finest in the capital in the old days the odds on getting something worth a great deal more than five pesetas were pretty good.

Henry Buckley, my paper's correspondent in Madrid—small, observant, with a one-sided smile and a passionate admiration for Negrin—pointed out to me a table almost next to our own at which an extremely pretty girl was in deep, and apparently affectionate, conversation with a man of about forty.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"That is Dolores Más," he said quietly, "one of the cleverest counterespionage agents in the Government pay. Watch out, as I think she's on the job now."

Sure enough, the clamor suddenly died down as three armed civilian agents surrounded Dolores' table, and asked her companion to come with them. Quicker than light he drew a revolver and fired, first at the agent nearest him, and then, with a look of intensest hatred, at the girl. The first bullet got one of the agents through the arm; the second smashed a wall mirror behind the girl's head, but the other two agents soon had him under control and marched him out. The excitement died down almost at once. Such incidents were too common in the Madrid of March, 1937, to arouse much interest.

Dolores powdered her nose, deftly applied her lipstick, rose to her feet, and on her way out paused by our table. "That was a Fascist colonel," she said, "it took me three weeks to fix him."

After the Mediterranean coast the cold of Madrid was appalling. Unthinkingly I had come away without an overcoat, and there was nothing warm to be bought in the shops, as everything had long ago been

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

requisitioned by the military. The inevitable result was a really impressive attack of influenza, complete with temperature of 103 degrees. It was impossible to stay in bed as there were no servants to bring food to the rooms, and the process of dressing and trapezing downstairs into an icy dining room to eat the eternal "garbanzos," referred to by the soldiers as farting beans, more than counteracted any possible advantages to be gained by spending the interim hours in bed.

I had seen all that I had come to Madrid in order to see, even including five minutes with the now famous General Miaja, who looked exactly like Punch, but struck me as able, and I wanted to get back to Barcelona.

Again the transport question was the main difficulty, but I learned that there were periodic convoys of cars going down to Alicante, being organized from the British consulate. I called upon the consul at a bad moment as he was just investigating the case of a dead Englishman, released that day from prison, where he had been held for suspected Fascist activities for the last three months. As the result of per-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

sistent efforts by the consul he had received a notification the previous night that the prisoner would be released at noon, and he had gone round to call for him shortly before that hour, only to be informed that, through an error, the man had been released at 8 A.M.

At noon his body had been found and identified in a back street not far from the prison. It had four bullet holes through its back. This, the consul explained rather bitterly, was all that happened if he exercised pressure for the release of any Englishman whom the authorities considered pro-Fascist. If he refrained from exerting pressure they remained, forever without trial, in prison.

However, despite his troubles, he was helpful. There was a convoy of five cars leaving the British embassy at four-thirty the following morning in which there would be a place for me. It was best, he said, to move my baggage into the partly ruined embassy building (it had been hit by a bomb a few weeks before) owing to the early start. The other passengers, he explained, were Cuban refugees, and Captain Lance was in charge of the party.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

I had heard rumors of Captain Lance, so I thought at once that this might be interesting, and arrived as bidden at about 9 P.M.

The British embassy in Madrid, scene of many stately receptions during the last two hundred years, presented an odd spectacle. My fellow passengers had already assembled, and each of them had been assigned a mattress on the floor of the ballroom. The British ambassador had removed himself across the French frontier at the outbreak of hostilities, with most of his staff. Ogilvie-Forbes, the chargé d'affaires, had moved to the seat of Government in Valencia with the remaining personnel. There remained in the embassy, therefore, no one but an occasional visiting military or naval attaché, and a few servants. Armed guards insured that the territorial rights of those inside were respected by the mob.

The reason for such precautions were soon apparent. No single one of the other sixteen Cuban refugees was a Cuban. Every one of them was a member of the old Monarchist order. Nine of them had titles; all of them were, I knew, being very

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

earnestly sought after by the Republican police. All of them, if caught, might expect death.

This interesting discovery made me particularly keen to meet Captain Lance again, and I was rewarded for a long wait by his asking me to join him in his small private room.

He was a small man, wearing an exceedingly loud check suit, part of his make-up as the slightly foolish, slightly alcoholic, P. G. Wodehouse Englishman who, in his dealings with the authorities, achieved the desired result of causing them to underestimate him.

Perhaps after the appalling strain under which he was living and working, it was a relief for him to talk to someone who was neither a Spaniard nor a diplomat. Anyway, whatever was the reason, we killed a bottle of John Haig between us and, as the night wore away, I learned something of the inside working of a system of bluff and double bluff that had fooled an army of armed and angry secret police, and led to the escape of more than three hundred of those already under the shadow of a violent death.

He had a number of organized hide-outs in various parts of the city. From these, by indirect routes, a

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

message could be got to him, and if the case appeared to him to be both sufficiently deserving and sufficiently desperate, he would set in motion his organization of bribery, bluff, lies, and disguises which would ultimately lead the "wanted" man to the embassy with a false passport—usually that of one of the South American Republics. A list of "nationals desiring to return to their own countries" would be handed by the embassy to the police authorities only after the persons concerned were safely on the foreign soil of the British embassy.

Convoys would then set out for Alicante or Valencia under official diplomatic protection, and there a British destroyer would be waiting to take them to France. The authorities could do very little about it, beyond suspecting the people in these convoys, of being what they undoubtedly were, since they were not, at this stage, attempting to leave the country, but merely to leave the capital. To have used force against embassy-protected persons was very much against the policy of the Government at this time, as they were still hoping to gain that help of Britain with the League of Nations. All that they could do

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

was to give accurate descriptions of the "wanted" men and women to the port authorities in Alicante, and it was there that the principal danger was to be expected.

The authorities were already more than suspicious of Lance's Scarlet Pimpernel activities, but since he had some kind of diplomatic protection they did not wish to strike until they were absolutely sure. He knew that their evidence against him was almost complete. He was trailed everywhere and his life was continually threatened by fiery Anarchosyndicalists who cared nothing for possible diplomatic consequences.

With the knowledge that the crash could not be for much longer delayed, he was showing signs of strain. His health had been further weakened by the fact that he had been slightly wounded by falling debris when the embassy had been hit by a bomb. That night he must have foreseen his arrest in a few months' time, and his eighteen-months' imprisonment during which he was to suffer every sort of privation and indirect torture. Night after night he was to be given a number, and then, in the morning, listen to those numbers before his own being called out by

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the executioners. Night after night he was to wonder whether or not his number would at last be called. There he was to wait, in his dark and icy cold cell, while those other convicted Fascists were shot outside his window. But always the executions stopped short of his number, and he escaped in the final retreat from Barcelona in January, 1939. Today he is still a soldier, but "somewhere in England," his immense talents as an espionage agent apparently ignored.

During the following days I was to see him as full of enterprise and daring as ever, but that night, for a short space, he allowed himself to appear as a man living on his last ounce of nervous energy.

It was not until after 2 A.M. that we parted with my promise that I would help him, in any way he wished, to dispose of his present batch of "Cubans."

The great ballroom was lit only by a single candle, but I found my mattress without difficulty and climbed between the blankets. As I was closing my eyes I caught sight of a full-length portrait of Queen Mary. In the faint light her expression appeared to be one of mingled outrage and astonishment. Glancing

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

round at the humped forms of the sixteen softly snoring "Cubans" I felt her surprise justified and, as I slipped down into sleep, remembered to murmur an apology.

Chapter V

LONG before the first light we were called, given hot coffee, and told to assemble ourselves with our baggage in the large marble, candlelit, hall. Quietly, as though conscious that it was an escape, people and suitcases were stowed away in the waiting cars.

It was bitterly cold, and the black streets showed bare and ugly in the faint light of our blacked-out headlights. The only sound was the steady banging of the iron door—the Fascist guns near the University City—that sound now so familiar in Madrid that you only noticed it when it momentarily ceased, leaving you with a sensation of having been deprived of some familiar thing until you could name to yourself what it was that was so abruptly lacking.

Just as dawn was marking white horizontal lines

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

upon the black sky we paused on a hill outside the city. Far below us and to the right the steady rumble of heavy guns, quite different from those in Madrid where the sound was echoed from stone buildings, showed us where the Battle of Jarama was being fought, the battle to keep open this slender life line of road along which we were traveling.

As we watched, eight Russian fighter planes swept up from the direction of Alcala de Henares, and as the light strengthened we could see that their objective was five heavy Italian bombers escorted by five German Messerschmitt fighters. In a moment the sky was alive with whirling shapes, and the crackle of machine-gun fire came down to us clearly. Soon one of the Italian bombers crashed in flames, and a second later another seemed to explode in the air. A Russian and a German fighter then became locked together in a head-on collision, and spun down slowly toward the earth still intermingled. Three minutes later another Messerschmitt crashed, and a third turned back toward the Fascist lines, losing height rapidly and with smoke pouring from its tail. The remaining

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

bombers and Messerschmitts had had enough, and turned to flight in disorder.

Five to one for the Russians—and this was in 1937—more than four years before similar battles with similar results were to be fought out over Russia itself as Hitler hurled himself toward Moscow.

We pressed on steadily and without further incident until we neared Albacete, when five planes zoomed up from our left, flying low enough for me to see that they were heavily laden German Junker bombers. They crossed almost directly overhead at 2,000 feet, but took no notice of us.

An hour later, when they had done their work, we reached the place that had been their objective—a village over which the pall of smoke and flames was still hanging. Men, women, and children were desperately at work tearing away, with their bare hands, at the tumbled ruins, in search of those whom they had lost.

We halted to help them, two "Cubans" and myself working on a small house of which the roof had collapsed. Under the instructions of a frenzied mother we cleared the doorway, and found a girl of about

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

seven lying quietly in a corner whence the debris had been held up by a stout fallen beam. She was quite dead, her skull having been smashed in. Across her chest was an undamaged hencoop, and in it a large cockerel was crowing over and over again, his idiotic defiance at those strange black birds that had so impertinently blown him from his place upon the roof.

After half an hour we were ordered back into our cars. We must not forget in the tragedy that surrounded us that the men in the convoy were in danger of death if they were discovered, as sure as those whose bodies were now being laid out neatly in rows on the pavement of this village.

Dropping down from the mountains to Alicante, just as it was getting dark, was to pass from winter back into summer. Behind us in the mountains Madrid was still held fast in an icy grip, but here the air was soft and warm.

By the time that we arrived it was quite dark, which enabled Lance to drop off two of his particularly dangerous charges at prearranged hide-outs. The rest of us went on to the Hotel Victoria, where

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

a large posse of plain-clothes policemen awaited our arrival, while Lance went direct to the consulate to meet the officers from the British destroyer at anchor off the town.

I had been warned to be round at the consulate early the next morning. Investigation had proved that all but two of the "Cubans" could get off without especial difficulty by means of their faked passports and a certain amount of bribery. The local authorities knew, or at least strongly suspected, that they were probably not what they professed to be, but they were comparatively small game. The bribed official could at least say afterward, if questioned, that he had had no special instructions to stop them, that their passports were in order, and that they were vouched for by the British embassy, with whom he had been told to avoid open conflict. But concerning two of them he was adamant, nor would money tempt him, since most specific and exact instructions had been sent to the port authorities, giving the most minute descriptions of the two wanted men.

The first big batch went off without undue trouble. They were, of course, stripped to the skin in search

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of valuables, but all these had been deposited by Lance with the consul, and would be taken on board later in an officially sealed consular bag. They had been carefully coached in their parts, and especially warned against showing resentment at any insults to Franco with which the guards often tried to provoke refugees into showing the nature of their sympathies.

With the bulk of the convoy safely off our hands we came back to the knotty problem of the remaining two. They had been safely smuggled into the consulate building during the night, but the two hundred yards from there to the docks was being ceaselessly watched by police agents, who took little trouble to disguise their profession. The problem seemed incapable of solution by any ordinary means, and Lance decided to fall back upon an old system of his which had served him before.

The plan might be called the "Silly Ass Englishman" plan. It works simply because so many races have a nasty feeling that the Englishman feels himself, quite unjustifiably, to be superior. Because of this nasty feeling the majority of the Continental races are delighted with any opportunity to laugh at

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

us, as, if you have reason to laugh at anyone to his face, it proves not only that he is not your superior, but that you are his.

The necessary "props" for the part of the "Silly Ass Englishman" are to be dressed as unsuitably as possible for the climate, to be unable to speak any language other than your own, but to believe that if spoken with increasing loudness it will be understood, to be noisy and a little drunk. So disguised it is possible to get away with murder in a Latin country.

At this time in Alicante anyone in a British naval uniform was allowed to go freely between his ship and the consulate, but their number was carefully checked by the dock police.

Word was passed to the ship, and shortly afterward two officers strolled onto the docks, each carrying an attaché case containing two spare uniforms and also flannel trousers and tennis shirts and shoes. After changing in the consulate they went off and had a couple of sets of tennis. Throughout the afternoon varying numbers of officers and men passed backward and forward between the ship and the consulate. In order still further to muddle up the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

count, men who had just been checked out by the agent watching on the docks, suddenly "changed their minds" and decided to loiter about the docks and neighboring streets.

Meanwhile, in the consulate I assisted in dressing up the two "Cubans" in the spare naval uniforms, while their owners, still in tennis flannels, looked on.

Late in the evening an apparently very drunk journalist carrying his suitcase in one hand and a bottle in the other, accompanied by two distinctly cheerful but not too noisy officers swayed off from the hotel toward the docks. I am sorry to have to say that they sang a bit, and laughed inordinately. A small band of locals, including at least two police agents, gathered round to laugh. I heard one of the agents say "That's all they can do—get drunk and make a noise—borrachos."

The light was failing as we roared onto the docks to the tune of a rather flat "Tipperary." We blundered along toward the waiting ship's boat, and were stopped by the dock police.

This was my cue to bring all the attention upon myself.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"I am going back to Barcelona," I confided, swaying slightly, "back to beautiful, bloody Barcelona."

"You want papers do you?"

"Well, I have got lots and lots and lots of papers—papers from the C.N.T., papers from the U.G.T., passports, journalist's papers, lavatory papers, and newspapers . . ." I fumbled about with a wad of them, letting some fall to the very superior amusement of the small crowd.

Talking in English the two "officers," after waiting a minute, strolled on unmolested, and slowly climbed into the launch.

After a little more blundering about and dropping things, it was found that my papers were in order, and I was helped by a thoroughly cordial crowd into the waiting boat. Occasionally as we moved away I hooted affectionate farewells. Ten minutes later I boarded the destroyer with my two "Cubans," one of whom greatly embarrassed everybody by falling on his knees on deck and offering up a prayer of thanks for his escape.

An hour later a very angry official came alongside with two British officers and an armed guard. "Who

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

are these two men?" he demanded the moment he got on deck. The commanding officer peered at them dubiously and said, "Why, it's Lieutenant Commander Smith and Lieutenant Commander Jones. What on earth are they supposed to have done?"

"Nothing," replied the agitated official, "but we counted them as having gone off earlier."

"Well, I can't help it if your men can't count properly," replied the captain. "If you are satisfied that these two men are British officers, and they have done nothing of which you wish to lay a complaint, you must, of course, release them or I shall have to inform London that two British officers have been wrongfully detained by you, and the consequences will be extremely serious."

"But we counted the number of officers who came on shore, and there are two too many," replied the by now perspiring official.

"Officers have been going to and from the ship all day," said the captain a little impatiently. "Obviously your men got muddled," and he turned away to his quarters as if the matter were closed, leaving the official in the hands of Smith and Jones, who

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

took him off to the wardroom for a drink to show that there was no ill feeling.

Half an hour later he returned to shore, convinced that such kindly, rather stupid people could not have put anything over on him—a tough Anarchosyndicalist with a reputation as a killer. He must remember to discipline the dock police for muddling the count. They had nearly made him look ridiculous in front of those simple “borrachos” by their idiotic mistakes—most undesirable in times like these. It is unlikely that he gave any thought at all to the drunk journalist.

Just before midnight, as I was settling down to a final game of Monopoly, the destroyer turned slowly north and dug her nose into the swell.

Twenty-four hours later, anchored off Valencia, I was awakened by the scream of shells. The *Canarias* was up to her old tricks again—shelling the temporary capital from five miles away, safely out of range of the shore batteries.

Most of us ran up on deck. Behind the city a great fire was burning. Tracer shells cut across the dark sky, and the night was full of the noise of death.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Suddenly shell fragments spattered on the deck near us, driving us to cover. Five minutes later all was quiet again but for the angry flames that licked and spat behind the city where a munitions factory burned itself into ashes.

Twenty-eight hours later the destroyer paused to drop me into a small boat off Barcelona, before pulling away northward into the growing light toward Marseille and safety.

It was a different Barcelona to which I now returned. I had been away only six weeks, but the passion and fire seemed to have died out of Cataluña. The Anarchosyndicalists still fired one mad decree after another against the tottering economic fabric of the state, but people realized that things could not go on much longer as they now were. This insane arabesque of meaningless gestures had brought the country to something near to total collapse. The anti-Fascist front was wasting its strength on fine words and foul deeds. Already the more serious among the Catalans realized that fusion with Government Spain against the common enemy was more

TRY - O U T I N S P A I N

important than these endless, murderous, interparty squabbles, but—and it was a big but—the Anarcho-syndicalists still had the power and the arms.

A revolution within a revolution was the only answer, and early in May it came, like everything in Spain, with a sudden and incredible violence.

Negrin, sickened with the verbose tyranny of the Syndicalists, marched north with veteran troops from Valencia. Barricades appeared again in the streets—stones torn up from the roads to shield human bodies, as they seem so continually to have been torn up throughout Spain's bloody history.

The difficulty at first was the mildly comic one of finding out just who was fighting whom. The two great trade-unions, the C.N.T. and the U.G.T., wavered, but realizing that Negrin was in deadly earnest they decided to stand aside from the struggle. The extreme Left Wing of the C.N.T., however—the A.I.T. (Iberian Anarchists) under Garcia Oliver—decided to back up the Trotskyists known as the P.O.U.M. (Universal Party of Marxists) under Nin, and as these two groups contained the toughest,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

most violent of all the Anarchosyndicalists the fighting was fierce.

By the third day the resistance became concentrated in the huge telephone building in the Plaza Cataluña, where a few hundred of the most desperate barricaded themselves in, and blazed away merrily with machine guns at anyone showing himself in the square. Garcia Oliver, the A.I.T. leader, fearing for his own dirty skin, came to terms with Negrin and issued a passionate appeal over the radio to his followers, begging them to abandon the Trotskyists and lay down their arms. It was a most moving oration, but its appearance of sincere spontaneity was somewhat impaired by his repetition of it at frequent intervals with all the sobs in the same place each time.

Company's, as usual, quickly got in on what was clearly going to be the winning side, confident that his position as President of Cataluña made him essential to Negrin as an ally. His powers were greatly reduced, but he was probably only too glad to escape the attentions of the violent gentlemen with large guns who, for the last nine months, had been bullying him into carrying out their insane orders. He could

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

now return to the agreeable and familiar world of wordy and slightly crooked politics.

The result was inevitable, and after three days' bitter fighting, in which some five thousand people lost their lives, Negrin was victorious and the Red Terror was at an end.

This was the moment when England and France should have shown their hands and have recognized the Spanish Government for what it now was, namely a lawfully elected body resisting a Fascist-inspired revolt. Had they done so in those days of early summer in 1937 a check would have been administered to Hitler and Mussolini which would have made them hesitate in their triumphal march across Europe. Action then would have saved Czechoslovakia, and possibly Albania and Austria, and so the final attack upon Poland, the direct results of which are now apparent to the whole world.

The reasons for our original reluctance were understandable. Although the Government of Spain in July, 1936, had been lawfully elected only five months before it had unquestionably fallen into the hands of murderous extremists. Religion had been

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

trampled under foot, and respect for property destroyed. In addition the degree of Italian and German intervention on the other side was still uncertain.

Now, however, those original doubts and restraints existed no longer. The Government had purged itself of its extremists and the Red Terror ended as completely as it ended in 1794 with the execution of Robespierre. Now Spain had a strong and moderate Government under a leader whose ideas were scarcely more violent than those of Ramsay MacDonald. Persecution of the Church was at end and, although admittedly very slowly so as not to offend those who, since the Church had openly thrown in its lot with Franco, regarded it as tainted with Fascism, facilities for worship were made available. Now, too, Italian and German intervention had become open and unashamed, and on a scale that unless counteracted must ultimately prove decisive.

Negrin, and his foreign secretary, Alvares del Vayo, sincerely believed that in resisting Fascism Spain was, since we claimed to be a democracy, fighting our battle as much as her own. They both realized too that the horrors of the Red Terror had been a

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

strong factor in our unwillingness to help. They had, however, destroyed the Red Terror, and now turned to the League of Nations confident of the justice of their cause, and of the identity of their interests with those of England and France in preventing the success of Fascist aggression.

The result of their faith in the League of Nations is now ancient history. What is perhaps not generally known is that they retained that faith until the end. Because they were both realists they could not, despite the continued evasions and insults of England and France, speaking through the League of Nations, bring themselves to believe that we would not act in the way that was not only our legal obligation, in permitting a power with whom we were at peace to purchase arms to defend herself against rebellion, but was also materialistically in our own vital interests.

I saw a good deal of Alvares del Vayo during the coming months, and often argued the point with him. I always assured him of my absolute conviction that England and France would do nothing to help Spain. If the people of those countries had been permitted to know the real facts it might have been different;

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

but there was a complete and, I am inclined to believe, intentional, conspiracy of silence that while it could not prevent them from becoming increasingly uneasy was just sufficient to prevent them from becoming fully and effectively aware of the danger their inactivity was promoting.

The smooth, plump, and experienced Prieto, the now minister of war, suffered from no such delusions. As a known Socialist he would have had short shrift on Franco's side and was left little choice, therefore, as to which side to support; but I always felt with him that he knew Franco must win, and intended to be well clear before the crash came. In fact he timed it beautifully, getting himself a nice, comfortable diplomatic mission in South America at the critical moment, and replying to all instructions to return with moving accounts of his heart attacks which made traveling impossible.

President Azana, whom I met only once to talk to privately, was mentally a giant, but a tired, ill, and disillusioned giant. He, more than any other one man, had been responsible for the exile of King Alfonso in 1931, and for the new Republic that replaced the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

monarchy. In five years he had seen his work corrupted and rendered worthless. He knew, I think, that Franco must win, but he knew, too, that he would not live long enough to mourn that victory.

Dolores Ibarru, "La Pasionaria," the Passionflower, had no illusions about the democracies. I met her several times, and deeply admired her. Her oratory was something almost beyond belief for its power and passionate sincerity. She often talked nonsense, but her nonsense sent more men out to fight against Franco than all the good sense of the others. Nor was this only her public manner. In private life she had the same flaming anger against the democracies for their indifference and cynicism as she had for Franco.

She used to get very angry with me because I used to attempt some sort of defense of Chamberlain's policy, not from conviction but to try to help her to understand a mentality so remote from her own. With her beautiful gray hair framing her passionate face and magnificent eyes she would turn on me and pour out a flood of words, persuasive, menacing, inspiring, scornful, but always beautiful if only for

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the instinctive music and cadence of her voice and sentences, and the scorching sincerity that lay behind them.

It is fascinating to speculate now upon what might have happened if the governments of the democracies had listened to those who knew Spain and understood at least a part of what was really happening there. Perhaps very little, but if those who tried to tell what they knew had not immediately been dubbed as Communists or dangerous cranks, it is possible that this inevitable World War would have been fought upon different and far more favorable terms.

To digress for a moment—why do embassies and legations never pass on to their governments some of the findings of reputable journalists? Diplomats necessarily mix with official circles and obtain their information primarily through official channels. Even when a diplomat has the enterprise to mix in other walks of life the mere fact of his being a diplomat will almost always have the effect of causing those with whom he talks to adopt the official point of view. Journalists on the other hand, in addition to friendly contacts with junior and often talkative mem-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

bers of most of the foreign embassies, also have countless other very unofficial but valuable sources of information, and they are, in the nature of their work, trained observers of what is true and what false.

It is easy to name a number of journalists who have been right before the event, such as Mowrer in Spain, Duranty in Russia, Douglas Reid in Europe, and Gedye in Czechoslovakia, far more right, in fact, than were their countries' diplomatic representatives. Yet, with a few notable exceptions, the attitude of the British diplomat is that the press are nothing but a pack of irresponsible hoodlums.

Is it that some of us did not go to the right schools, or is it merely due to a diplomatic desire not to risk the exposure of their own ignorance, that makes them so unwilling to make use of us?

Three years later, in June, 1940, in a certain Balkan capital the British diplomatic attitude toward journalists was delightfully exemplified. The minister's wife heard, to her great distress, that one of our number had not only been to Eton and Oxford, but had also some titled relations. That being the case he should obviously be asked to dine at the legation. He

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

was, however, a journalist, which meant, of course, that if he came near the legation the more portable articles of silver should at once be locked away into safety.

Here was a very real social problem which, despite such extraneous matters as the German infiltration into the country, required immediate solution, and the good lady met it with that genius for compromise that has always been such a notable feature of our foreign diplomacy. She asked him to dine, but she introduced him to all the other guests as "one of our assistant air attachés." The shameful truth, as she informed him in a playful aside when he looked a trifle bewildered, should remain their own little secret.

Negrin's assumption of power and the ending of the Red Terror were not enough to counteract the growing weight of Italian and German men and material that were pouring in to Franco's assistance. Despite heroic resistance, weight of numbers, superior material and training, and, above all, a heavy preponderance of planes crushed the Basques and the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Asturians, and by autumn placed the whole of Spain's northern coast line in Franco's hands.

In Barcelona, where I spent the whole of the summer, this was a quiet period of preparation, of cleaning up the mess left behind by the Red Terror, and of hammering the whole industrial potential of Cataluña into readiness for large-scale war production, livened only by rare, and not very effective, air raids.

One evening, late in July, I was telephoned to from the Hotel Majestic, and the voice of a woman announced that the speaker was, to invent a name, Clara Paule, who said she was a fellow correspondent.

"Please come at once," said the voice, "I am being watched. I feel that I am in terrible danger."

I shot around as fast as I could go, and was told that the woman I was looking for was in the dining room. I entered, and was greeted regally by a vast and imposing female of about 45, magnificently, even if somewhat unsuitably, arranged in full evening dress, and with a gold turban upon her head.

"Good evening," I began, "you telephoned me——"

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"Hush," she said in a whisper like the escape of steam from a railway engine. "We are watched."

I gazed round nervously, and found that it was true enough. Everyone in the crowded dining room was watching my companion, with a mixture of incredulity and alarm.

"Sit," she commanded, "and act as though nothing strange was happening."

I sat obediently. "But is anything strange happening?" I stammered. "I mean, apart from ourselves?"

She looked at me pityingly. "You are young," she said, "or you would sense the danger all around us. Ever since I entered this terrible country I have been shadowed, watched." She swung her two-hundred-pound person toward me winsomely, and placed her man-sized hand on mine. "But I feel safer now you are here. You will not let them do anything to me, will you?"

I struggled for air, and the appropriate words, but words were unnecessary. She poured out an unending flood of them. I fought my way through a sea of tattered newspaper cuttings showing her talking to

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the Emperor of Abyssinia and of the Emperor of Abyssinia talking to her. I waded through columns of highly emotional journalism bearing her signature, and listened to her expression of violently anti-Government sentiments, based primarily, I gathered on "the dreadful things they do to the Fascist women," all delivered with appropriate gesture and flashing eye and in a stage whisper that could have been comfortably heard in the street outside. All this was punctuated with dramatic pauses when, with finger to lip, she would say in a thrilling whisper that would immediately bring all other conversation in the room to a dead stop, "But hush" (I not having had a chance to get a word in edgeways for the last half hour), "speak lower. We are surrounded by hostile, listening men, killers many of them—and worse."

I had a feeling that unless I escaped soon I should stick on a false moustache and begin a conversation with the phrase, "But soft, we are disguised."

Muttering incoherently I staggered toward the door, but I had underestimated the tenacity of my companion.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"Perhaps you are right," she said, rising to her full six feet, "out in the dark, lonely streets perhaps we can talk more safely," and swept out, darting alert glances at a nervous and entirely inoffensive waiter.

Once outside she did her best to slink from cover to cover. It is difficult to slink if you weigh two hundred pounds, but she did her best and seemed convinced that a lamppost was sufficient to "fox" the enemy. A generous bust and a fundament built for comfort rather than speed would, of course, project on either side of this cover, but she was clearly not going to let any such prosaic questions mar the drama of the situation.

I escaped into my own hotel with the greatest difficulty and to incredulous cries of, "But you *couldn't* leave me alone among all those cruel, bestial men."

I could and I did, and I shuddered with sympathy for any cruel, bestial man if he had an escape as narrow as my own.

Next day I gave a heavy bribe to the telephone operator to say, to anyone calling me from the Majestic, that I was down with a touch of bubonic, and

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

two days later I heard that, acting strongly against official advice she had gone on to Valencia and Madrid. The officials, realizing that she had the entire Security Force of Republican Spain badly rattled, as they could not believe that anyone could act so peculiarly as she did and not be either a danger to the State or else a homicidal lunatic, had intimated that she might be running into trouble; but at the warning she had drawn herself up to her full height, and with raised finger had cried, "Duty—it is my duty to go on, even though death and—" with a faint note of hopefulness in her voice—"worse than death may await me."

After nearly a fortnight I had begun to hope that I had heard the last of her.

Very early one morning my telephone rang and the clerk told me that two plain-clothes policemen, who had driven by car all night from Valencia, were on their way up to my room.

It is not necessary to have a guilty conscience to feel uneasy at receiving sudden calls from the special police of a country at war, and by smuggling out uncensored dispatches I had, if discovered, earned for

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

myself at least immediate expulsion from Spain; so I was not too happy as I hastily put on a dressing gown, and tidied away the papers on my desk.

A minute later I admitted the two agents. The leader was a hatchet-faced man of about 40, who spoke English with a Brooklyn accent. His assistant was the usual big-muscled, one-candle-powered brain flatfoot that the police force of every country seems to produce in bulk.

The leader came straight to the point.

"Are you associated with a woman, claiming to be a journalist and giving the name of Clara Paule?"

"Not associated," I replied. "I met her once and have taken care not to do so again."

"Did you avoid remeeting her because you knew or suspected that she was engaged in pro-Fascist espionage work?" he inquired.

"No, only because I found her the most crashing bore," I said.

"Well, we have her in prison in Valencia," he informed me, "and she gave us your name as being someone who would guarantee that she is a journalist, and not a spy."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"It is true that she is a journalist, and indeed quite a famous one, and I am convinced that the Fascists would not be fools enough to employ anyone as a spy who attracted attention to themselves as much as she does," I replied.

"That's what we thought," he admitted, "but why does she behave so peculiarly? She screamed and wept in the most amazing way when we called on her, and it took four strong men to take her away. Why, if she has nothing to conceal, does she act as though she was expecting to be shot or raped at any moment?"

I shrugged. "I suppose that she cannot write the sort of emotional drivel in which she specializes unless she first gets herself all worked up."

He shook his head. "Foreign newspapers pay such people much money. Here in Spain we lock them away somewhere quiet where they can cause no trouble."

"I prefer your method," I said, "but newspaper editors like to employ the mad, so as to make themselves feel more or less sane by comparison."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"Well," he said finally, "will you sign a paper saying that this woman is not a Fascist agent?"

"I will gladly sign a paper saying that I do know that she is a journalist by profession, and that I am personally convinced that she is not a Fascist agent."

"That would do," he said eagerly. "You can have no idea of how anxious all the prison authorities are to get rid of her."

I had a fleeting vision of the prison authorities in an advanced state of nervous prostration, scheming together as to how on earth they could find an excuse to get rid of Clara Paule, and of these two men driving all through the night in the hope of saving the prison governor's tottering sanity.

They drew up a long document in duplicate—I still have my copy—to which we all three solemnly placed our signatures. After a cup of coffee they left again for Valencia, bearing the glad tidings, and two days later Clara Paule was hustled to the frontier in a closed car and dumped on the French side as an undesirable alien.

This, of course, was a setback to her career, and for months afterward words both in print and on

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the radio poured from her as to the "real inside dope on the Red Terror." The public naturally were delighted and believed every word of it.

Another though extremely different type of person was arriving in Barcelona at this time in the desire to learn for themselves the conditions of Spain. This was the clergy of England, who with a praiseworthy disregard for their own safety, were arriving in droves, whole beves of bishops, coveys of canons, and dithers of deans spending as much as a week in Barcelona, Valencia, and Madrid on especially conducted tours, after which they returned to their own country to inform the public, by means of a stately letter to the *Times*, of all the true facts about Spain.

I was sitting in the lounge of the Majestic one day when two of those dear old gentlemen returned from a highly informative motor drive around the park. Both of them sat down conscientiously to enter up their impressions in small leather-bound notebooks, clearly bought in England for just this purpose.

After a few moments of thoughtful writing one

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of them looked up, and peering over the top of his spectacles at his companion, said:

“Excuse me, my dear Ponsonby, but I feel that it is important for me to be sure to get everything quite in order. Let me see now—this is Barcelona, isn’t it?”

It was this same sure penetration to the very root of the matter which gave them, on their return to England, the right to speak with authority of the inner meaning and international significance of the life or death struggle that Spain was fighting.

In September I received a letter from the *Telegraph*. They took this opportunity to thank me for my work on their behalf, and stated that they would not be requiring my services further as from one month’s date. They remained, however, mine very truly, which, of course, is always something.

Almost simultaneously I learned that my grandfather had left me one thousand pounds. After creditors and lawyers had had a crack at it there remained about three hundred. Having estimated that this sum, soundly invested, would produce about one and a quarter bottles of whisky a month it seemed

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

that the obvious course of action to pursue was for me to take it to the Casino at Cannes, and turn it into three thousand pounds. Toward the end of October, therefore, I left Spain as I thought for good, but actually for two months.

In a white Provençal farmhouse, in the hills above the sea eight miles from Cannes on the road to Grasse, in the sleepy little village of Mougins, I installed myself. The fields were full of violets, although it was nearly November, and the oranges in my garden were nearly ripe. From the shade of the vine-covered porch I could see the Isles de Lerin floating on a pale sea. Behind me wood smoke from my own chimney floated straight up into the clear sky. After dinner the car drove me down the hill to the Casino. Sitting in the rumble seat I could watch the stars blowing like sparks through the black branches overhead.

Spain was little more than a remote and unpleasant dream to me as I sat down at the long green baize table, a pile of chips in front of me—a pile large enough to encourage the conversational attentions

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of some of the very lovely ladies whose business demands attention to such matters.

At about 2 A.M. on to a night club. Here men danced with men and women with women. Husky sailors clasped decoratively painted youths in their arms. Horse-faced females in tweeds danced possessively with their simpering little blondes. The Cabaret left nothing to the imagination, but suggested a bored satiety rather than lust. In front of Les Girls skipped and danced a hag of at least 50. She was the proprietor's wife and had been quite mad for many years. She loved to dance with the Cabaret, as she used to do when she was young, and so no one stopped her. Raddled, painted, and desperately thin, with her gray hair straggling into her eyes, she leapt and cavorted in front of the shapely nudes.

Behind the bar the proprietor, a small, quiet man, with a short, black beard, scribbled away on a large writing pad placed beside the cash register. I learned that he was writing a book, and I asked him what it was about. Raising pain-filled eyes to me he replied quite seriously, "It is a Life of Christ."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

By November 15 my three hundred pounds had become eight hundred. On December 7, I pawned my typewriter to buy a third-class ticket to try to find a job in London.

Chapter VI

I WAS lucky. The *News Chronicle* wanted someone in Barcelona, which was now the seat of the Republican Government, to cover for them, for three months only, until the end of March, when their star reporter, William Forrest, would be free to go out to Spain.

London seemed bleak, impersonal, and utterly indifferent to anything but the football fixtures—the loneliest place in the world. To quote Fredrick Lonsdale, “England is like so many women that one knows—far easier to die for than to live with.” As the Continental Express slid out of Victoria Station, I found that I still felt the same pleasurable thrill that I have experienced all my life on similar occasions ever since I can remember. The day that I find that I have grown out of experiencing a sense of relief

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

at the start of a journey I shall know for sure that I am no longer young.

I had to go back to Cannes for my dog, my luggage, and, incidentally, to get my typewriter out of pawn, but I chose to see none of my friends of the last two hectic months, and after only twenty-four hours there I caught the Marseille train.

An extraordinary wave of cold had begun to spread across the whole Continent. My train from Marseille to Foix, at the foot of the Pyrenees, was eighteen hours late owing to the line having been blocked by a smash in which ten people had been killed, caused by the signals having become frozen. All the way I was accompanied by one of those strange but ubiquitous individuals who like the window hermetically sealed and the heating full on, and who feel no shame whatever in snoring.

The depths of extreme boredom compelled me to spend a considerable amount of time in studying the mentality of the confirmed snorer. I tried waking him up each time that he began to snore to see whether his obviously genuine desire to sleep, combined with the realization that he would not be

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

allowed to do so if he snored, would induce him to sleep without snoring. He confided in me that only if he was snoring could he fall into a really satisfactory sleep. To snore, he explained with disarming sincerity, was an essential to the enjoyment of a good sleep as belching was to the enjoyment of a good meal.

Feeling that I was not getting anywhere by the application of pure reason I then tried exactly imitating his snores, to see whether this interfered with his capacity to sleep as much as the noises that he produced interfered with mine. Faithfully I reproduced them all as a duet, the Rattle and Whistler, the Short Snort and Lip Smacker (suggestive of a tardy appreciation of yesterday's onions), the Tonsil Wrencher, the Self-Awakener, which makes so much noise that it brings the executant almost to consciousness, and the rather endearing Whistle and Puffer. My efforts seemed merely to make his slumbers the sweeter, and I was compelled at this point to desist in my valuable experiments by the discovery that a small group had gathered round the corridor window, following my actions with a fascinated interest,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and were clearly debating among themselves as to whether or not to pull the emergency cord.

Late on the 30th I arrived at Foix, with its ruined castle perched on a black rock, and the swift-flowing river rushing through the center of the town and beneath my hotel bedroom window. The cold was growing hourly more intense, the air seeming to quiver with the bitter wind that blew down from the invisible mountains.

All the next morning, the last of 1937, the train climbed slowly through the Pyrenees, past the borders of Andorra, and it was dark long before we reached Barcelona. The cold seemed to get worse, though here snow had fallen. The train was hours late, without heating or food, and blacked-out so that it was impossible even to read. My dog climbed inside my overcoat for warmth, and together we stared wearily out of the blank, black window at the occasional faint lights of some poverty-stricken village.

At 11 P.M. we finally pulled in to the pitch-black station. There were no porters and no taxis, but a vast Basque soldier whom I had met on the train

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

shouldered my heavy suitcase as though it were a feather, and together we marched off, through streets made visible only by their covering of snow.

My room was like an icebox, and my stomach protestingly empty. Through the gap of a broken pane, through which the wind howled like a banshee, I could peer down into a corner of the Plaza Cataluña, which showed utterly deserted.

Climbing into bed, and arranging my dog in her favorite position upon my feet, I toasted her rather forlornly from my emergency flask of brandy.

Salute to 1938.

All the play acting and individual heroics had finally disappeared from the Barcelona to which I was returning after two months of absence. These people were now grimly involved in a struggle for survival. The new Popular Army, under the lash of Negrin's iron determination, was at last a reality, led by such Russian-trained generals as Lister and Rojo, who now launched their first successful offensive against Franco.

Marching through five feet of snow they captured

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the supposedly impregnable Fascist mountain stronghold of Teruel. Now, after eighteen months of war, the battle was joined in earnest, and the force that Negrin had built up was, at this time, sufficient to have swept Franco and all his works into the sea, had he not been assisted by a Hitler and a Mussolini already too deeply committed to be able to allow his defeat, and had the democracies not been so busy finding formulas, exploring avenues, and leaving no stones unturned.

The question of raw materials for the factories was already causing serious anxiety to those in the know, and the blockade was beginning to make itself felt in the increasing scarcity of food, since the agricultural districts of Spain were all in Franco's hands, the Government holding almost exclusively the industrial areas. Franco, the Rebel, could remedy his industrial poverty from the growing factories of Germany and Italy. Negrin, the head of a lawfully constituted Government, on the other hand, was permitted no means of remedying the loss of the great food-producing areas of the northwest.

On January 30 came the first of the Terror Raids

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

upon Barcelona. Spain now became the guinea pig upon which the Axis experimented in order to learn the lessons that were to be put into practice two years later against the democracies.

There had for some time been a controversy in military circles in Berlin, as to whether a country could be beaten into submission by the ruthless bombing of the civilian population. That raid upon Barcelona on January 30, 1938, which happened to be my 31st birthday, was the direct ancestor of the blitz upon London, and of such raids as those upon Rotterdam and Belgrade. It was only a preliminary for the real test in March, but the results achieved satisfied the German general staff that by these means the resistance of the men at the front could be effectively weakened and the path to victory shortened.

They have persisted in that belief, and it is not easy to see why. Spain's defeat was not, in my opinion, primarily caused, nor even greatly hastened, by air blitz tactics. The same methods completely failed against London and Moscow. In France, Holland, and Yugoslavia they may have accelerated the collapse, but I am convinced that they did not cause it.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

From what I saw of the Italian efforts at a blitz upon Salonica in November, 1940, it had only a hardening effect upon Greek morale. In each case defeat from quite other, and overwhelmingly strong, causes was already inevitable. Victory and defeat are gained upon the ground, not in the air over the civil population, and from everything that I have seen of war, whether in Spain, Poland, Greece, or Burma, the undoubted power of the air to influence the outcome lay only in its use against the opposing fighting forces in the field, and to a lesser extent against the industrial machine furnishing the supplies to those forces, but never by the assassination of masses of the civil population, whose morale, after recovering from the first terrible shock, is strengthened not weakened by such methods.

Ruthless bombing of large centers of population has never yet won a war, and I am equally convinced that the employment of the same weapon against Germany and Japan will not be a primary factor in their ultimate collapse. The world is still possessed by the potentialities of this comparatively new weapon, and has still not yet fully appreciated the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

fact that, despite its immense offensive power, it still has very definite limitations.

February was almost free of raids, but on March 15, simultaneously with the great land offensive that was to separate Madrid and Valencia from Barcelona by driving a wedge to the Mediterranean, began the first sustained air blitz of the Second World War. Every three hours for three days and three nights planes poured across the sky in an unending stream from Majorca, only 140 miles away.

After the first twenty-four hours it became a kind of sleepless nightmare in which incidents, times, and people became a shapeless blur. Huge loads of high-explosive bombs were tipped out indiscriminately onto the center of the town, each raid claiming hundreds of victims, and sending scores of houses crashing into ruins. One raid alone, lasting only ninety seconds, caused twelve hundred casualties.

Disconnected incidents alone constitute my memories of those three days. I cannot recall eating or sleeping, only a tiny stratum at the top of my brain continued to work, to make notes, and to think. Pity,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

sympathy, understanding, and all ordinary emotions, even including fear, were entirely in suspension.

I remember passing down a shattered street where there had been a crèche for working mothers to leave their small children on their way to work in factories and shops.

The building had suffered a direct hit. In the gutter opposite I found the forearm and hand of a child of 2 or 3 years, still grasping in its fist a cheap rag doll.

At some indeterminate stage of those three days I found myself helping to remove debris from a bed which had fallen from the second floor of a totally wrecked house, but had fallen, miraculously, the right way up. In it we found an exceedingly angry, but quite unharmed, little old lady of nearly eighty.

Her first observation when we approached her was, "This is just another trick by that rascally son and daughter-in-law of mine to try to frighten me into my grave. After this not a penny of my money will they get when I die." She spoke the truth, for the son and daughter were both dead, buried deep under a mass of fallen masonry.

Sometime on the second day I met a good friend of

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

mine, who asked me to come back with him to his third-floor flat. We climbed the stairs, all lifts and lighting had long since ceased to work, and he opened the door with his Yale key. It became stuck in the lock when he had already opened the door and he was unable to withdraw it; and for perhaps a minute we stood together, rattling and pulling it to free it from the keyhole, instead of going through into the sitting room as we should otherwise have done.

With a deafening shock a bomb hit the house, literally tearing it apart. From the end of the twenty-foot passageway we watched the dining and sitting rooms slowly fall away into the garden fifty feet below, while we were rattled back and forth between the passage walls, like dried peas in a pod.

More than half the entire block of flats had ceased to exist. Removing the key that had saved our lives, which now came away from the lock without the slightest difficulty, we went out onto the partly collapsed stairway. People had been killed in the flats above, below, and to the side of ours, and we helped to remove the dead and dying.

I remember helping an elderly man out to an

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ambulance. He was still fully conscious and able to walk with assistance, but his face was twice its normal size, totally hairless, and of a deep purple-blue colour, with every pore stretched so that each one was the size of a large pinhead. He died in the ambulance before reaching hospital.

A little later I was in a restaurant, just off the Plaza Cataluña, on the ground floor of an eight-story building. There were eleven other people—all men—snatching a hasty meal in a kind of trancelike silence. Without warning a small bomb fell down the elevator shaft and burst at the end of the restaurant. Part of the ceiling fell in. The next thing that I knew was that I was irritably brushing plaster from my suit. Looking round I found that eight out of the eleven were dead.

At some period during the second night I found myself in the subway station under the Plaza Cataluña. In it there must have been something between three and four thousand people, packed tight across the platforms, between the metals, and away into the dark caverns of the tunnels. The air was of a foulness that it is impossible to describe. There was not room

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to lie down to sleep, but many slept, half crouching or leaning against their neighbors. The electricity had been switched off, and the only light was provided by two giant flares. Their unsteady flicker shadowed the pale faces uncannily, making them seem of a deathlike haggardness.

Under one of the flares I found a silver-bearded old gentleman, surrounded by a dozen children. He was reading from a book and, as I moved nearer, I recognized the sonorous Spanish of Cervantes. With the ancient tale of Don Quixote he was beguiling away an hour or two of the modern hell. The sick little, oxygen-starved faces of his audience, tense with interest, showed that they had forgotten their present misery and fear, and were living, for the moment at least, in the spacious plateaus of ancient Castile, where the sun, the wind, and the open sky could charm away the memory of this stinking prison.

I suddenly felt something very like affection for that gallant old gentleman. His was a finer courage than that of the soldier.

As I left I took one last look. I was looking at

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Barcelona, March, 1938 — but also at London, November, 1940.

Later, though I have no idea how much later, I was walking along a black street, able to pick my way by the sheen of the starlight on the inch-deep layer of broken glass that covered the roads and pavements.

Why was I not afraid, and what did that glitter of glass remind me of that assured me that I had no reason for fear?

The small, detached, quite clear but quite emotionless and uncontrollable part of my brain, which was all of it that had functioned for nearly seventy hours, presented me with a series of pictures that supplied the answers.

I was on a walk with my grandfather on my summer holidays in the Isle of Wight. He was 85 and I was 13 years old, but we were pretty good friends. It was a fine sunny day, and the sea, a mile away, was sparkling and flecked with white. We were to inspect some cottages in the village of Nettlestone, which he was proposing to sell. The fields that we passed, filled with Alderney cows, were his as far as

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the eye could see, and he pointed out to me which of these fields would make good building sites, and for which I should, therefore, ask a higher price when perhaps, in the years to come, I might decide to sell them.

As we approached the village, and hats were touched to the familiar six-foot-three figure, with the silver-white beard and the ebony cane, it became clear that something unusual was afoot.

In the middle of a small crowd stood a gypsy caravan, brightly painted in gay colors, and on the steps of it was an angry, but to me, beautiful woman, dressed in orange, and with a small child clinging to her flame-colored skirts. She was facing a loud-voiced, red-faced, very angry man, whom I recognized as the village publican.

Way was made for us, and the publican hurried to get in his story first. The gypsy woman said nothing, gazing only at the tall figure with the silver hair.

"We don't want no thieving gypsy in our village, we don't," began the publican, "and so I took the liberty of ordering her off this 'ere field."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

"And is it your field upon which you have forbidden her to camp?" my grandfather inquired.

"Why, no, sir," the publican replied, slightly puzzled, "it's one of yours."

"And since when have you been acting as my agent?" said the icy voice that I knew from experience meant trouble for someone. "I will trouble you to mind your own unpleasant business in future, and to get yourself instantly off my property." Turning to the woman, who had not spoken, he added, "You have my permission to camp on my land for as long as you wish," and then aside to the village policeman who, having decided that there was not going to be any trouble, had put in an appearance, "I hold you personally responsible that this woman is not further molested, and to inform me of the name of anyone who tries to interfere with her in any way," and without another word, or waiting for a reply, he stumped off through the rapidly dispersing villagers.

Late that night I climbed out of my bedroom window by the well-tried creeper that covered the old house, and threaded my way, a trifle nervously, past the hidden shrub-covered entrance to the smugglers'

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

cave, which had been discovered only when the workmen were digging the foundations of the house two hundred years ago. From inside that dark cavity, with its lichen-grown walls, sounds of a desperate hammering were to be heard all over the house during certain seasons of the year. A wall had been knocked down only a few years before to try to trace the origin of this hammering. Inside had been found a kneeling male skeleton, its fists still pressed against the bricks. It had been duly buried, but the knocking still came occasionally.

Twenty minutes later I saw the small fire where the gypsy caravan was pitched. The woman was there, but the child was sleeping inside.

"I was expecting you," she said. "Let me repay the kindness of the old one by telling you the future, but this will be no trickery to gain a shilling, but the whole truth."

Everything that she told me that night has come true—every single sorrow, parting, loss, happiness, and journey. Only one thing has not yet happened. She said, "Most of your life you will be close to

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

danger, but it will not touch you, but when you are fifty-five you will die suddenly—by violence.”

As she said that I noticed how the crystal into which she had been gazing glittered. Then, as now, the sheen of starlight on glass.

Standing on the balcony of the British Club, a drink in my hand, I could watch the planes sailing in against the sun to drop their fresh load of bombs.

Soon lorries were being driven up from the docks with their latest burden of unrecognizable dead. In an attempt to obtain some accurate idea of the mortality figures I had, that morning, visited the extremely modern morgue, where each body was placed in a separate drawer of a gigantic frigidaire which flicked open to a touch, revealing its gruesome contents for identification to those in search of their missing or dead.

But these now coming up from the dock area were not destined for the frigidaire—only for quick and anonymous burial. These were the unrecognizable dead—unrelated limbs, heads, and torsos that jounced

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

together in an obscene dance as the lorries raced across the pitted and uneven surface of the road.

Suddenly there was a vibration like a gigantic earthquake and I fell to my knees. Slowly the trees in the Plaza Urquinaona bent gradually, smoothly, irresistibly, until they were almost double. For a long moment they stayed like this, and then were released, suddenly tossing, tearing, and straining in a gale of hot wind, that smelt as though the gates of hell had been opened. A moment later a sound such as I had never heard before tore at my eardrums and beat against my temples.

I hurried out toward a rising pillar of dust and smoke in the Calle Cortes. Whole streets of houses had been wiped out, others had been carved neatly down the center like slices of cake. Cross sections of rooms, pathetically domestic, were suddenly revealed to the public gaze. A dining room on the third floor of a house was still neatly set for lunch, with table mats, glasses, spoons and forks, though only half the room remained. A lavatory perched incongruously on the very brink of a sixty-foot abyss, the toilet roll flapping like a banner in the breeze of the open air.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

This unexampled explosion was the result of an accident, as surprising, no doubt, to the pilot who had dropped the bomb that caused it as it had been to those below.

A lorry load of explosives was being hurried across the city, between raids, en route from the factory to the front. On it were seated five armed guards. A 250-pound bomb made a direct hit on the lorry, and the resultant explosion tore down the entire street for fifty yards. Of the five guards the only trace was a single military boot, its owner's leg still inside, that swung jauntily from one of the higher branches of a plane tree in the Paseo de Gracia, 200 yards away.

All through this nightmare period, day and night, dispatches had to be telephoned or cabled through to London. Until 3 A.M. half-a-dozen correspondents crouched over their typewriters, straining their eyes by the light of a single candle, attempting to convey to the world some idea of this new reality of war, now being made perfect for use against themselves. As we wrote, the building would rock to the impact of new explosions, and the candle flared and flickered in the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

unnatural gusts that swept in through the windows, from which glass had long ago been blasted.

It was too big for the British papers to ignore, but they did not like it. Fortunately, with the Cup Final not far away, public attention could soon be diverted into pleasanter channels, and a story that I wrote for a magazine called "To France," based on a signpost bearing that inscription that I had seen outside Lerida as I had left it in flames a few days before as the Fascists came in, was put in its true perspective by a letter from a retired colonel. From the detached viewpoint made possible only by residence in Hove, he clearly classified it as "alarmist nonsense" and—still more shattering—"most un-English."

There is reason to believe that Franco and his backers in Rome and Berlin thought that this offensive would be the knockout blow. If it could have been sustained for even a little longer perhaps it would have been, but neither men nor machines could maintain the pace. Somehow or other the Government kept on its feet, to fight on for another full year, though now it was a hopeless fight with only one possible outcome.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The offensive had achieved much, even though it fell short of complete victory. Franco's forces were now established on the Mediterranean coast in a narrow funnel between Valencia and Tarragona, completely severing Madrid, Valencia, Cartagena, and Alicante, with the greater part of Republican Spain, from the vital industrial area of Cataluña, with its French frontier across which a few optimists still hoped that supplies would arrive from the democracies before too late.

It seemed a good time to leave Spain and when, toward the end of March, Forrest arrived to take over from me, I thought that I should not be sorry to go. But when I began to say my farewells I discovered that this was not so. I had been so intimately mixed up in the whole affair for nearly two years that it seemed absurd to walk out on the last act. The trouble was that every newspaper had its representative already on the spot, and I could not afford to stay on without a job.

A few days before I was due to leave I was sitting in my room in the Hotel Continental, with Reuter's

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

correspondent, Bill Williams, lamenting my departure.

"Why don't you become the correspondent for the *Daily Mail*?" he asked suddenly. I regarded him anxiously. Was the strain beginning to tell on a once fine brain? The *Daily Mail* had openly favored Franco throughout the war, and was, in consequence, violently disliked by the Republicans.

"Even supposing that the *Mail* would take me on," I replied, "the locals would clap any correspondent of theirs in jail before they permitted him to send a single dispatch," I pointed out.

"Not if you handled it the right way," he replied. "Why not go to the Press Department and point out to them that at present the only reporting of events in Spain appearing in the *Daily Mail* is from Franco's side and, in order to pass the Fascist censorship, must necessarily present only one side of the truth. The authorities here know that while you are not particularly pro-Government you are certainly not pro-Franco, and would at least let the truth of their case appear, for the first time, to the million and a half readers of the *Daily Mail*. That, you might point out,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

would be of greater value to them than favorable reports from such papers as the *News Chronicle*, which has always been anti-Franco."

I felt that the administration of alcohol might encourage him to continue giving birth to pearls of wisdom, and produced my last, infinitely precious bottle of whisky, by now quite unprocurable in Barcelona.

"And what is the sales angle for the *Mail*?" I inquired. "Their policy for nearly two years has been not to have a correspondent on the Republican side. Why should they suddenly change that policy just to oblige me?"

"That seems obvious," he replied, regarding the whisky with reverence. "Tell them that which is neither more nor less than the absolute truth, namely that the collapse of the Government, told from inside, is going to be a tremendous news story, from which they alone are likely to be debarred. Point out that you, as a correspondent known not to have pro-Franco sympathies, are the only person who would be acceptable to the Government authorities as the representative for their paper."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The more I thought about it the more certain I became that the idea was practicable. The next day, therefore, I presented myself before Constanca de la Mora, the woman who had become the dictator of the Foreign Press Department.

She merits brief description. She was a Communist, educated in Russia, who spoke every European language as well as she spoke her own. Few people and no other woman have ever impressed me with the same sense of latent mental power. She was in the middle thirties, rather masculine in manner and clothes, and had a nice taste in pretty secretaries. Everything that she did and said was quietly efficient, passionless, and far-seeing.

After I had painted a moving picture of the advantages to the Republican cause of obtaining, for the first time, a hearing in the *Daily Mail* she nodded her approval, and then, to let me know that she was fully conversant with my personal motives, remarked with complete seriousness:

"I should not like to feel that, in your consideration for obtaining for the Republicans point of view a hearing in the *Daily Mail*, you were in any danger of

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

causing yourself any financial loss by leaving the *News Chronicle*."

As she knew perfectly well that I had been replaced by William Forrest by the *News Chronicle* I felt that there was no appropriate reply. I always left Constanca feeling that she was at least three jumps ahead of me, but at least I had obtained the required permission, so I replied politely in similar vein, referring indirectly to the well-founded belief that she had salted away a packet of Government money in Moscow by saying:

"Naturally we must none of us entirely overlook the opportunities of earning a living that are being offered by the present exceptional conditions."

Armed with her permission I hurried to London and found the *Mail* quite willing to take me on as their first, last, and only correspondent in Government Spain, and by June 1, I was ready in my place to see the final act in the tragedy with which I now felt myself so closely connected.

Chapter VII

THE bombing of Granollers, a small town some forty miles north of Barcelona, was almost the first important story that came my way for the *Daily Mail*.

So much has been written about bombings, and so many more have been experienced since that day, that it does not seem so important now as it did then. As an example of barbaric savagery, however, it must still stand high on the Fascist crime sheet. It was a town wholly without defenses, not even a machine gun, and wholly without factories or military personnel. It had a population of about five thousand of which three thousand were either killed or wounded during the raid. I do not think that anything since has produced a casualty rate of more than 50 per cent of the total population, even though more died in

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

single raids on large cities like Rotterdam, Warsaw, and Belgrade.

Militarily speaking, the main operation of that summer was the Battle of Ebro, a long and bitter fight in which the Government staged what was to be their last full-scale offensive, but which developed into a battle of men versus machines in which, inevitably, the machines won, despite an example of dogged heroism which has probably never been surpassed.

Against this background, however, had begun a new Reign of Terror. The Red Terror was ended by Negrin in May, 1937. Now, just about a year later, began the Black Terror—the terror of the S.I.M. (*Servicio de Investigacion Militar*)—the Secret Police. Beside this new terror stalked its shadow—famine and pestilence.

I had, of course, known of the existence of the S.I.M. for some time, but had regarded it as nothing more than that which it claimed to be; a counter-espionage force, unpleasant perhaps in its methods, but necessary in every war and doubly so in a civil war.

My first shock of realization came when I was

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

called upon in the middle of the night by the father of an English girl, with a Spanish mother, whom I knew only slightly. He was trembling and almost unable to speak, but after a while I was able to get the facts.

His daughter had been stopped in the street on her way home and rough-handled into a waiting car. The men who had done it were plain-clothes policemen, but inquiries at all the prisons had failed to elicit her whereabouts. Would I help him to find her?

As I hurriedly dressed I considered what could be done. The consulate, the only British authority in Cataluña, had abandoned Barcelona for the village of Caldetas, fifty miles up the coast, where the bathing was good and where there was less chance of air-raids. The only thing was to go direct to the minister of the interior, at his home, and try to frighten him as to the effect of the arrest in England, when I told the story to my paper.

It was nearly 2 A.M., but by a mixture of competent lying and bribery, we got the minister out of bed. I presented the case as causing me anxiety chiefly because the arrest of a British subject, on anything but

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the most serious and well-founded of charges, would be certain to have effects infinitely more serious for the Government cause than any harm that could possibly be done to it by the arrested girl's crimes, whether real or imaginary.

The minister saw my point completely, growled about punishing blundering idiots, and immediately got busy on the telephone. After two or three false starts due to the lateness of the hour he got through to the chief of police, and after a long pause, while inquiries were being made at the other end, he received a brief report. Slowly his face changed, and an apologetic tone crept into his voice and something very much like fear into his eyes.

Replacing the receiver he mopped his brow, and looking at me nervously he said:

"Why didn't you tell me that it was the S.I.M. that had got her?"

"Because I didn't know," I replied irritably, "but whoever is responsible for the arrest the gravity of their action remains, and you, as minister of the interior, are presumably the supreme authority responsible."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

He smiled sadly. "How little you know of the S.I.M.," he said. "If she is in their hands there is nothing that I, nor for that matter, the president, can do. If I moved against them I should most probably be dead myself within a week. They are a law unto themselves alone."

Something in the man's manner convinced me that he was telling the absolute truth, at least as far as he knew it. There seemed to be nothing that he, nor I, nor anyone else, could do. The girl had disappeared. Nothing remained but to work through the slow official channels, and hope that one day she would be released.

I never saw her again, but a few months later I heard, by a roundabout route, that she was in a nursing home in England, being treated for a complete mental collapse and venereal disease.

Another friend of mine, a Spaniard, similarly disappeared, but only for two weeks, for questioning. I noticed with him, as I noticed with others who had similar experiences, that they could not be persuaded to say a word of what had passed during the period of their imprisonment, but that there was some look

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

about them all, especially in the eyes, that contained a fear that was not entirely sane.

I decided to find out what I could of this organization. My position as a foreign correspondent, with influential friends, gave me a certain measure of immunity. Slowly, by indirect methods, I began to approach nearer the forces that lay behind the S.I.M., and the more I learned, the more incredible, the more like a lunatic's nightmare, it became.

I cannot, even now, disclose my methods of finding out as much as I ultimately did, as it would involve people still resident in Spain, but my facts are correct.

The great body of the S.I.M. employees were more or less what they claimed to be, an armed secret police force, with exceptional powers granted owing to the exceptional circumstances then prevailing. They had a chief whose name I soon discovered. My task was then to find out who it was who gave him his orders, as I knew that it was not any of the official military or political leaders. Soon I came to a man named Peters, who never appeared in public, but who seemed to be the ultimate authority of whom anyone working for the S.I.M. had ever heard, but after a time I was

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

able to satisfy myself that there was yet another, still greater, influence behind even him.

By the kind of luck that sometimes occurs if all your spare-time thinking is devoted to one subject, I was able to find out who was this ultimate power controlling the machine, unknown to all but a handful of even those who obeyed his always indirectly conveyed orders.

He was a cripple in a wheel chair as a result of terrible injuries in the last war, a Central European, either Hungarian or German, and his name was given to me as Carlos Conrad. He answered to no authority in the country, and there was no known link between him and any foreign power. No one knew from whom he drew his power, who paid him, where he lived, nor even, very exactly, what he looked like. All interviews with him were conducted in a very dimly lit room, with a strong light playing into the eyes of the visitor. His specialty was believed to be the invention of a number of new methods of breaking down the resistance of obstinate prisoners.

I myself, after Franco's entry into Barcelona, saw one of the rooms designed by him. Weird patterns

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

in brilliant colors drew the eyes in wearying circles. The only place to rest was a sloping stone slab set into a wall. The slab was tilted so that only with your muscles flexed could you avoid sliding slowly down the slope. If you slept for a moment you would begin to slip. Into the cement of the floor onto which you would fall from the slab were set hundreds of small but razor-sharp stones.

These designs, and many other new forms of mental torture, appeared to be the sole relaxation of the man Conrad. One of his favorites was the employment of the endless repetition of a single question by a concealed phonograph in the prisoner's cell, that would keep on and on, day and night without cease, until the victim was usually reduced to screaming the desired reply so as to break the unending monotony of the words that was being hammered at the very roots of his sanity.

Slowly I was able to build up a fairly complete picture of this man, and then one day I received a warning from a friend, who worked for the S.I.M. as an agent provocateur, that my own life was in some danger as a result. My interest in the man behind

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the organization was known and was unwelcome. If it continued it might prove fatal.

Knowing the power of the S.I.M. to carry out its threats I let the matter drop, intending to resume my inquiries after an interval had elapsed, but events moved too fast to allow me the necessary time, and temporarily the matter faded from my mind.

More than two years later, in October, 1940, I was in Bucharest. The Germans were already everywhere in the capital, in the hotels, strutting as conquerors in the streets, standing elbow to elbow with me in bars and cabarets.

Rumania was still officially neutral, but actually she was no longer anything but another enemy-occupied country, and she had received orders from her new masters to get rid of the few English still within her borders. A force of semiofficial thugs, identified with the Nazi Iron Guard Party, which had seized power six weeks earlier and forced King Carol to flight and exile, was under orders from the German legation. It was engaged in terrorist activities whereby British subjects were kidnaped and, after completely disap-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

pearing for a week or so, were found in a badly beaten-up condition. The police, of course, professed, probably with some truth, that they knew nothing about it, and it was already quite obvious that it would not be possible for anyone without diplomatic status to remain in the country much longer.

For several days now, myself and a few others had been operating a mutual protection system whereby we checked one another's whereabouts every four hours by telephone so that, if one of us disappeared, the delay before the legation got busy would be minimized as far as possible.

I was naturally working, from a journalistic point of view, in connection with this terrorist secret organization, tracing it back, step by step, to Fabricius, the German minister in Bucharest. Then one day the incredible happened. I learned that Fabricius merely dictated the political lines along which the persecutions were to proceed. He gave his suggestions to a man whose headquarters were in Brasov—and whose name was Karl Konradi.

Karl Konradi—Carlos Conrad—the idea suggested by the similarity of these names seemed fantastic. I

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

immediately put into operation every line of subterranean inquiry that I possessed which, as I had been in the country for over a year, ever since I had fled from Poland, were many.

Slowly the reports began to come back. No one seemed ever to have seen the man, but he was known to be a cripple, diabolically clever, but cruel to the point of madness. There was a suggestion that he had invented a new system for cross-questioning reluctant prisoners.

What system? I asked. Rather vague replies came back—something about repeating the same question by phonograph until the victim collapsed—secret prisons about which there were strong rumors of mental torture. The former minister of the interior, Marinescu, was reported to have gone mad under this treatment.

I dropped all other work to try to follow up these clues, but conditions were already becoming almost impossible for an Englishman, with telephone lines tapped and spies dogging my footsteps.

Late at night my telephone rang, jerking me out of the half-sleep that is all I can achieve at such times.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

A voice in German said, "You will be out of Rumania within forty-eight hours if you value your life."

I replied in English that I only understood the civilized languages. There was a pause and then another voice said in English:

"I should take notice of this warning if I were you," and then, almost with a laugh, in Spanish:

"I had to warn you once before, you may remember—just over two years ago."

The following day I bought two large metal bolts, and personally superintended their fixture above and below the lock. My flat was on the fifth floor, and could not be got at by the windows.

Without telling him my reasons I obtained the private telephone number of Robin Hankey, the first secretary of the legation, who despite his personal dislike for myself, was both extremely able and right on his toes to help any Englishman who was in a tough spot, unlike the rest of the legation, whose attitude was that we should have left the country long ago. I was to telephone him at any hour if anyone attempted to force their way into my flat during

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the night, when he would come along posthaste, armed with all the weapons of aggressive diplomacy.

Meanwhile I continued my inquiries. Berlin and then Rome radio, mentioning me by name, stated that I, "the well-known poisoner of the wells of truth," had fled from Bucharest. I countered this with a particularly belligerent dispatch to my paper to demonstrate that I was still in Rumania.

Seventy-two hours after the first telephone warning, at 3:30 A.M. there was a ring at my flat door.

I was alone, having sent off my dog and my luggage to Bulgaria the day before, by my very good friend Derek Patmore of the *News Chronicle*.

Without turning on the lights I went to the door, and peered through the tiny spyhole, with which most Continental doors are equipped. Outside on the landing I could dimly see three figures in leather overcoats. I went to the phone to call Hankey. The line was dead—cut. The streets below were utterly deserted as a rigid curfew was in force. There was no one to whom I could shout from the window for help, and would not be until dawn.

After repeated ringings and knockings the latch

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

was rattled violently, and then I heard the sound of a metal jimmy being inserted below the lock, and the creak and crack of small fibers of wood.

During the next hour and a half I went through the worst ordeal that I have ever experienced in the whole of a not uneventful life. Would my two stout metal bolts hold? A strong factor in my favor was that my visitors did not want to make so much noise as to attract attention to themselves. The outward seeming of Rumania being a neutral country had still to be observed. In a little over an hour it would be light and, with the lifting of the curfew there would be people in the streets to whom I could shout from the window with some chance of getting help, or at least attract a great deal of attention to myself of a kind unwelcome to my visitors.

In a chair facing the door I watched and listened as fragments of wood were prized away. Occasionally I could hear a low-voiced consultation, and then some new part of the door would be attacked, stealthily, so as not to make too much noise, but with a terrifying persistence.

To this day I do not know what caused them to

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

give it up. Perhaps they were convinced that the door was too strong to break down without rousing the whole block of flats. Perhaps my complete silence and the absence of light from within led them to believe that I was not there, but whatever the reason, as the window frames began to show gray outlines, they left.

Half an hour later I switched on the light in the bathroom and washed my hands, which were sticky with sweat. My face in the mirror was gray as was the dawn outside. Everyone has his own pet fear, and mine is of being beaten up, which seems infinitely more terrifying than any quick death.

The next day I caught the last plane to Sofia, and from there sent part of the story to my paper, where it caused something of a major sensation.

He who writes and runs away,
Lives to write another day.

But I am still not satisfied as to the identity of Carlos Conrad, or Karl Konradi. Are they one and the same person? Is he a warped genius wielding some strange power beyond nationalities and politics, used by any

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

nation sufficiently lost to all code of decency, and offering his services for the pleasure of watching whole bodies and brains reduced by his methods to a condition of helplessness even greater than that imposed upon him by the fact that he is a cripple? Is it some half-insane idea of revenge upon the world for his own sufferings that leads him to direct the innermost councils of the secret police organization wherever he finds human passions sufficiently inflamed and uncontrolled to allow him unlimited scope for the pursuance of his experiments in human suffering?

It seems fantastic in the light of the day, but reaching out into the dark places in search of news, occasionally, especially in abnormal times, the tips of the fingers touch something so foul that the brain recoils, as at the unexpected contact with dead flesh, something so nightmarishly evil that for the moment the steady light of probability and reason, by which alone life as we understand it is possible, becomes momentarily dimmed.

Not all contacts with the S.I.M., or at least with its

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

outer fringes, were so grim as those which I have related. There was one skirmish, for example, between the S.I.M. agents and the representatives of the foreign press from which we emerged very definitely the victors.

Several of the correspondents used to meet and gossip over a few drinks between 10 P.M. and midnight if news was slack. It soon became obvious that our conversation was the object of profound interest and suspicion to the secret police whose agents had taken to hanging about in the lounge, and trying to listen in to what we were saying.

It is quite impossible to impress upon the Continental mind that a British journalist is usually just that and nothing more. As most Continental journalists are compelled to work as spies for their government if they wish to keep their jobs, communicating such information as they may glean to their local consulate, legation or embassy, it is assumed that members of the British press do the same. Little do they realize that far from being encouraged to trot along with any tidbits we are almost universally regarded as a scourge and a pest, constitutionally incapable of

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

telling or even recognizing the truth concerning the events that surround us.

At the beginning of 1941 I was nearly arrested in Bulgaria on suspicion of being a British agent because I was staying at the most expensive hotel in Sofia. The chief of police, a bullet-headed individual with the pleasant nickname of the Black Panther, put the thing in a nutshell when he said:

“Our most highly paid journalist earns the equivalent of five hundred pounds a year. No one not earning more than that could possibly afford to live at the Hotel Bulgarie, so that clearly you have other, and more profitable, purchasers for your information than your newspaper.”

To which I fear that I most improperly replied that the annual expenditure of King Boris was about one third of the sum spent in twelve months by the proprietor of my newspaper, but that this did not prove that Lord Rothermere was anything more than what he professed to be.

It was not surprising, therefore, that the S.I.M. soon had agents in the lounge of our hotel whose job it was to listen in to our conversations and report on

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

them to their superiors. For nights they listened in to the usual collection of improper anecdotes and endless "shop" which usually passes for conversation among journalists. A foreign correspondent, however, because of the nature of his work in neutral but highly suspicious countries, is more than ordinarily sensitive to being watched, so that even if we had anything hush-hush to say it would most certainly not have been said before strangers.

Although the presence of secret police agents, therefore, was not dangerous it was mildly irritating, so that we evolved a game to keep up the interest of our unofficial audience. This was called Mumble-Mumble, and consisted of sitting with our heads close together, in a highly conspiratorial attitude, and saying in turn,

"Mumble-mumble—Burgo-mumble-bumble—Sargossa-buzz-buzz—Avila—and so on, interspersing the names of any towns in Franco's hands with a buzzing suggestive of conversation.

The results were most gratifying, our audience almost tipping out of their seats with their ears flapping in order to catch what was being said. So agitated did they become, under the influence of Mumble-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Mumble, that their reports decided their superiors to send along a really big shot in the hope of getting to the bottom of the mystery.

This gentleman put up at the same hotel, and took an early opportunity to make our acquaintance. He had been told, perhaps not wholly inaccurately, that the quickest way to the average correspondent's heart, and so to his commission of the requisite verbal indiscretion, was by the prodigal use of alcohol.

One evening, therefore, when Williams of Reuter's and I were alone, he approached us with great affability, and soon disclosed that he had two bottles of genuine Gonzales Byass brandy in his room. Would we come along and try it?

Once there the party went with a swing, round following round until the first of the bottles had disappeared and, by 3 A.M., the ebb tide had set in heavily on the second.

Williams, like myself, unfortunately possesses a teaklike head, and neither of us felt more than mildly benevolent. Our host, however, not having had a Fleet Street training, was completely "pickled." The evening's entertainment came to an untimely end when

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

he insisted upon demonstrating to us how he could walk the full length of the room upside down, on his hands. He achieved about half a length and then collapsed, falling instantly into a deep sleep where he lay on the floor. His sporting activities had jerked all his papers out of his pockets, including his secret police pass.

We carried him tenderly to his bed, and placed two aspirin tablets and a glass of water on the table at his side. I wanted to pin his police card to his coat lapel, but Williams, wiser in his generation than I, vetoed the idea saying:

“Why cut off a future supply of good liquor when it’s so scarce? If we don’t let him know that we realize that he is an agent he might try again, and Gonzales Byass is not to be despised.”

Accordingly we sat down quietly to finish off the second bottle, and then tiptoed out, leaving our host peacefully snoring.

We greeted him the next day as though nothing unusual had happened and, after a lapse of days, our friend decided that we still suspected nothing and so gamely returned to the attack. Once again we repaired

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to his room where two bottles of Gonzales Byass awaited us but this time, although our host poured out the drinks level, we soon realized that, in walking about the room, he was making use of anything that he could find to tip away all or part of his portion.

As the evening progressed he did all in his power to encourage us to talk freely, but was met with a fine example of Lord Balfour's observation that "words are given to man to enable him to disguise his thoughts." I refused to be side-tracked from interminable reminiscences of the Balkans. Williams told him, in immense detail, all about how his father had discovered vitamins, and had refused to sell the idea to Sir Jesse Boot.

Slowly, however, the game was beginning to pall, and I fell out of the deliberately bogus conversation. Interpreting this as a sign that the Gonzales Byass was having the desired effect our host, leaving Williams to continue alone a masterly analysis of Charles Dickens, said:

"Look here, we know each other pretty well by now. I don't mind you knowing that I am not really a shipping agent, but am actually working here on

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

behalf of—" he dropped his voice appropriately—"a Russian armaments firm." He waited to see the effects of this revelation, which were uncertain, before continuing:

"I know that you are a journalist, but wouldn't you be interested to make a little money on the side in my business? You are not only a journalist, I know. What's your real game?"

I opened one eye, and regarded him solemnly. Opening the other I leaned forward impressively and said:

"Well, I know that I can trust you, but don't tell a soul. I am really a police spy sent here to watch the foreign correspondents," and relapsed back into apparent sleep.

After that, to Williams' infinite regret, our friend gave us up as a bad job. I heard two months later that he had been shot dead in a Madrid hotel room, presumably when engaged upon similar activities with less amiable companions.

Visits to cafés or restaurants at night were not without risk. Lightning raids were being carried out all the time, and there was always a chance of running

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

into a little shooting as the authorities combed and recombined the city for real or imaginary Fascist sympathizers, apparently failing to realize that their methods were more likely to create them than the reverse.

One night, when I was standing at the bar of a large restaurant in the Plaza Cataluña with some friends, I suddenly felt a violent prod in the small of my back and, on turning round, found myself looking down the business end of a Mauser revolver. We were herded into a waiting car, and I shall never forget my relief when it turned to the right, in the direction of the Via Layetana, and it became obvious that our arrest was by the genuine police authorities and that we were not being "taken for a ride" by one of the semiofficial murder gangs of the S.I.M.

I was released with copious apologies, after an uncomfortable hour in a stuffy cell, and the agent who had arrested me was roundly rebuked in front of me by the superintendent of police himself.

The only real danger from such incidents was if one of the members of the party, too deeply imbued with the spirit of democracy, should attempt to resist arrest, and an American colleague of mine had a very

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

narrow escape from death for that reason on the same evening as my own arrest. He was nice enough afterward to admit that my advice to "go quietly," which he most certainly would not have done of his own accord, had probably saved his life.

There were other types, besides police spies, living in my hotel. One particularly unpleasant specimen, who looked like a broken-down schoolmaster or renegade parson, used to provide me with considerable interest.

He was an Englishman of about 50, with graying hair that shed a perpetual powder of dandruff upon the shoulders of the rather shabby black coat that he always wore. He was being paid by some Communist organization to collect the British members of the International Brigade as they emerged from hospital, and talk them into going back again to the front.

Many of these International Brigade men left hospital disillusioned and, feeling that they had done their bit, anxious only to return to their own country. These he would gather round him, ply with cheap alcohol and pious sentiments until the poor fools, flat-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

tered by his solemn interest, would promise to go back to the ranks.

I had, perforce, to listen to some of these pep talks, and of all the canting, fraudulent, half-educated slop that I have ever heard, it was the most smugly nauseating, but with the simple souls upon whom it was expended, it usually worked.

While working on his victims he would always look piously shocked when invited to drink but, directly he had sent off a fresh batch to their probable deaths, he would retire to his bedroom. Half an hour later he would descend, walking with extreme care, slightly brighter of eye and cheek and slightly damp of lip, reeking of excellent whisky.

All through this summer of 1938 I was visiting the Ebro front, only about one hundred miles down the coast.

Transport was the chief difficulty, and we used to have to share whatever car was available. Ernest Hemingway, who was working there as a correspondent, was one of the most regular visitors to the front, while Buckley of the *Daily Telegraph*, and Mathews of the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Chicago *Daily News* or William Forrest of the *News Chronicle* were usually with him.

All these four felt very deeply and personally that the Government cause was our own, and I think that some of the dispatches that they sent at about this time were, as journalism, about as good as anything I have ever seen.

Each had his own distinct type of physical courage under fire, which used to amuse me. Mathews, who under normal conditions was extremely short-tempered became, when under fire, one of the kindest, gentlest, and most considerate of men. If things were really bad he would go about doing little kindnesses, and smiling amiably at anyone within sight. I formed the impression that only under circumstances of real danger was he really, deeply at peace with himself and his fellow men.

Hemingway, who certainly possessed great courage, was always deeply aware of the drama of the circumstances in which he found himself. Without play acting or, in all probability, without even being conscious of it, he was always anxious to act as Robert Jordon of *For Whom the Bell Tolls* would have acted

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

under similar circumstances, and the tougher the situation became the less he was Ernest Hemingway and the more he became Robert Jordon.

Buckley, a devout Roman Catholic, was always quietly gay when things looked bad, but perhaps because he is made in a more sensitive mold than the others I always felt that in order to do the things he did required more real moral courage for him than from the others.

William Forrest appeared quite unaware of the existence of danger, strolling about happily with bullets whining uncomfortably close, and not bothering even to duck, which I am afraid I cannot prevent myself from doing. The only sign I was ever able to observe in him that he appreciated the dangers of the situation as clearly as anyone else, was that his Scottish accent used to become intensified by about 200 per cent.

When I could not get a car for myself, Reuter's Special Correspondent, Joseph Swire, used to lend me his little 10 h.p. Ford, and, with it, his tough little Basque chauffeur, Eduardo.

Swire belonged spiritually to the arty world of

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Bloomsbury, and his new wife, a brilliant pianist, even more so. Eduardo, who lived in the Swire establishment, used to suffer accordingly. Like most Basques he was a real tough he-man. His idea of a light snack would be about two pounds of almost raw beefsteak, washed down by a gallon of beer or wine, after which he would like to pay a visit to the fattest girl he could find in the local brothel.

He was deeply upset by his treatment in the Swire household, and I shall never forget the real tragedy in his manner when he confided in me that his employers insisted upon providing him with tea and Chopin to satisfy his appetite. He was getting "sissy," he told me gloomily, and had not had the heart to pick a single fight nor to pay a single visit to his girl friend for nearly a week.

Food was becoming increasingly scarce. A Black Market had grown up, based partly on barter, since the Government money was rapidly becoming useless as there was nothing to be bought. I myself was paying the equivalent of fifteen dollars for a dozen fresh eggs, but the only real purchasing medium was the tins of food and cigarettes that one or other of the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

correspondents would fetch from across the French frontier every few weeks.

Restaurants were frankly advertising five pesetas for a cat, ten for a dog, and two for a rat. These delicacies were all served as "rabbit," either in the form of an indescribable stew or in mincemeat balls, universally, if impolitely, known as "cojones de conejo."

It is difficult, living under even comparatively normal conditions, to realize how all-important becomes the question of food when you are averaging a total of not more than one meal a day. In the British Club, now reduced to a few dozen members, the sight of a group of men, their heads together, talking in hushed voices would in normal times have suggested the recounting of some rather "blue" experiences in Marseille or Paris. Now, however, if you troubled to listen to what was being said you would as likely as not hear someone begin a sentence in a rapt and reverent tone with, "I remember a steak I once had in the Berkeley Grill in 1936. It must have weighed about half a pound, and had been just scorched on both sides but with all the juice sealed up inside until I cut

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

it . . .” or some other equally treasured culinary memory.

Shortness of food induces shortness of temper, and I remember one day sitting quietly in the bar with my friend Percy Wallace, when a tiresome little man called Archie gave way to a quite unprovoked exhibition of temper with the barman, Manuêlo. I strongly dislike people who bully servants, and in any case had frequently suffered agonies of boredom from the bald and conceited little man who was responsible for the present exhibition, so I peered over the top of my paper and inquired of Percy audibly, “What on earth’s bitten the little man today?”

Before the little man in question had had time to say anything Percy replied in an imitation stage whisper, “Be careful: it looks as though he had been eating meat again.”

Nor was there the comfort of alcohol to quieten complaining stomachs, nor even tobacco, unless it was a little ship’s plug cadged off some visiting blockade runner. All beer, wine, or spirits had disappeared, and the only thing that could be bought was a strange, locally produced, concoction optimistically described

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

on the label as brandy. This seemed better than nothing until one man who had been drinking it steadily became paralyzed in both legs, and another became temporarily blind.

I continued with it myself until one day when, with one of these "brandies" in my hand, I was called to the telephone. In setting it down hurriedly on a wooden table, I slopped a little round the stem of the glass. When I returned I picked it up again and found that the liquid had burned a deep brown ring not only through the paint, but into the wood itself. If it did that to wood in a few minutes, I wondered, what on earth must it be doing to my unfortunate stomach?

A game of billiards was difficult as Barcelona's black-out worked on the master switch system, and no sooner had the game got going than all the lights would go out, either for an air-raid alarm or to preserve precious electrical power for the armaments factories. About all that was possible after dark was chess by candlelight—if Manuelo had been lucky enough to find any candles—but even that became something to look forward to as a change from the police-infested hotel.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

When my supplies of tinned food had run out, and the news did not permit of a dash across the frontier for more, I sampled the restaurant cats and dogs, but, as there was no decent oil in which to cook them, no vegetables to cover the flavor, and no bread, except for half a roll made with ground nutshells instead of flour, I usually preferred to stay hungry.

I had lost fourteen pounds in three months, but not even this would induce me to try the rats. I have had a strong dislike for rats since in 1932 I helped to fight a bubonic plague in West Africa.

In the summer of 1932, at the age of 25, my employers and myself decided, almost simultaneously, that I did not possess the necessary moral disqualifications to continue in the advertising department of their publishing firm. Pondering the problem of my future I began to walk across Victoria Street, just below Westminster Abbey, and was very promptly knocked down by a Packard.

I was not much hurt, but I was taken to Westminster Hospital and tested for shock. Suddenly a great light dawned upon me. As I was out of a job, and

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

possessed only enough money to keep my creditors at bay for about three weeks, the obvious thing to do was to travel round the world.

An American friend of mine, who happened to be a millionaire, had some time before my disagreement with my employers and the Packard, found himself one day in Genoa. Having done himself rather too well at lunch he had gone out for a walk, but the hot streets, plus the lunch, had induced in him an overwhelming desire to sleep. Finding an open doorway, leading into a cool and spacious room comfortably provided with chairs, he had entered, and was soon fast asleep.

Some unspecified time later he awoke to find himself surrounded by about thirty eager Italians, who were bidding energetically against each other in what appeared to be an auction sale. A sale was always like a bugle call to my friend. Maybe it was a bargain upon which he had stumbled. Fiercely he flung himself in the bidding. Never should these damned dagoes get the better of a 100 per cent American.

Finally, after beating down spirited competition, Lot 5 was knocked down to my American friend.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Triumphantly he strode to the clerk, handed him his card, and said:

"Send it up to my hotel, and I will let you have a check."

"But, sir," remarked the clerk a little nervously, "Lot Number Five is a thousand-ton tramp steamer."

"In that case," he replied haughtily, "don't send it up to my hotel, but leave it where it is."

The cold and unsympathetic light of the following dawn confirmed the fact that he was, in truth, the owner of a 1,000-ton tramp steamer. This, although disquieting, was not allowed to interfere with his enjoyment of life. Clearly, having become the possessor of a tramp steamer, the thing was to turn it into a yacht, hire a crew, stock up with liquor, and sail round the world.

He had been kind enough to ask me to go along with him, pointing out that we should not be away more than two or three years, but as I was at that time still trying to earn a living in advertising, I had regretfully declined. Now, however, my advertising career having come to a very definite conclusion it seemed an excellent idea.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

I made inquiries and discovered that my American friend had only got as far as the Canary Islands, so that it was comparatively easy to catch him up, and three weeks later I was aboard my friend's ship in Las Palmas harbor.

During the next fortnight we cruised on slowly south to the Cape Verde Islands where we did some fishing for giant tunny, and then to Dakar, the capital of French West Senegal.

There a cable awaited us from the States. My host's younger brother had committed suicide, and he himself was urgently needed to return to assist in sorting out the dead boy's affairs. The effect upon my host of this terrible news was to order the ship to sea. Once out again in the Southern Atlantic he began to drink until he had reached the desired state of exaltation. At about 2 A.M. on the second day from port he confided in me that he resolved to scuttle the ship so that "we could all go to keep Johnnie company."

Much as I sympathized with him I felt no pressing desire to "join Johnnie," but any suggestion to that effect seemed certain to produce dangerous reactions. My host weighed eighty pounds more than myself,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and despite a slight advantage in height from my six foot one inch, I knew that I would be quite helpless if I let matters come to a fight. The crew spoke no known language, and would in any case obey his orders rather than mine unless they guessed his purpose, and the only other passenger was my host's German mistress, who was my sworn enemy since I had refused to take advantage of his absence from the ship for a night in the way she seemed to think politeness demanded.

A hundred-odd miles out to sea in the Southern Atlantic is not the ideal place in which to find yourself with a powerfully built maniac, apparently resolved upon mass suicide, and my discomfort was intensified when he produced a tommy gun, and started blazing away out of a port hole at the flying fish as they glided toward the light.

The only thing to do seemed to be to play for time, and the ultimately inevitable effects of alcohol, so I said:

"Johnnie was a good guy and he would have liked us to drink to him before we go to join him," which idea was received with enthusiasm, while I

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

enlarged upon Johnnie's own prowess as a good drinker. I poured out a half tumbler of neat brandy for my friend and another for myself, and insisted that we must drink it to the last drop, and then smash the glass.

The glass-smashing touch, in my host's present mood, was an inspiration, and had to be repeated with other large doses of brandy. On top of what he had already had this treatment had the desired effect. My host lurched up the companionway toward the deck, missed his step, and immediately went to sleep with his head on the tommy gun on the top step, his body stretched down the slope. Gingerly I removed the weapon, and quietly dropped it overboard into the sea.

The next day I joined energetically in the search for the missing gun, but despite my best efforts it was never found.

Twenty-four hours later we put in to a tiny port between Dakar and Freetown, and were immediately placed under quarantine. Bubonic plague was raging, and scores of dead lay unburied in the narrow, filthy streets.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

The local authorities decided to burn down the native quarter to prevent the plague-bearing rats from penetrating to the European quarter. A hundred-yard-wide swath of huts was leveled, and the native quarter on one side was set afire. Two hour shifts, with shotguns, were apportioned to all European males to watch for the rats as they sought to escape toward the European quarter. By night giant flares were lit, and the shifts went on.

I shall never forget those three nights when I took my turn with the other five men who constituted the shift. Away beyond the burning native huts was an unending beating of drums as the medicine men sought to placate the angry gods. The first that I would see would be the reflection of the flares shining red in the rats' eyes. Many got caught in the nets that had been strung across the way for the purpose, but could easily be shot as they tried to struggle free. Others, however, crazed by fear of the fire, would somehow jump the nets, and seek to scuttle across the open hundred yards to safety. Then all the guns would bark almost simultaneously, and the rat would roll over dead.

At the back of everyone's mind was the realization

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

that if one rat got through, the two hundred white men, women, and children in the European quarter would almost certainly suffer the same fate as the scores of dead natives that I had seen, their bodies lying neglected, corrupting in the African sun.

One morning I counted 140 shot rats, lying in the narrow leveled path. Almost all of them were infected with the plague. Some of them were already covered with running sores; almost all were obscenely bald, foul beyond description.

So that when six years later in Barcelona, I was offered a choice of rat or remaining hungry, I resolutely preferred to go without.

On a day at the end of July, when I returned unexpectedly to my hotel, I found two small boys leading my dog away up the street. I caught them and, under my none too gentle questioning, they admitted that they were taking her to a local restaurant to sell.

Clearly the time had come for me to remove her to a place where her well-nourished contours would attract less cupidity. I was due for leave, and I cabled my paper, "Taking fortnight's leave to deposit dog

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

with friends in France. Barcelona good enough for journalists, but unsuitable for dogs."

A week later I was in Annecy, not far from the Swiss frontier. My first visit to a first-class restaurant after leaving Spain is still a painful memory. Slowly, deliberately, with dripping jaws, I ordered all those things to eat and drink about which I had been dreaming for the past months. After one course I had to leave with unseemly haste. My insides so long unaccustomed to rich food, just could not compete, and it was only after ten days or so, of gradually increasing portions, that I could once again persuade it to retain an ordinary man-sized meal.

Chapter VIII

THAT autumn was the autumn of Munich. The world held its breath to see whether it was to be war or peace. "Peace in our time" reported Chamberlain, having gained a precarious eleven months. The world was all too ready to believe him. Few realized that the wars in Spain and China were the overture to world war, and that nothing could now arrest the playing out of the whole piece.

People wanted to believe that Munich meant peace, and the long drawn-out agony of Spain made it difficult. The result was a growing tendency to ignore events in Spain. It was too big a news item to be excluded completely from the papers, but the feeling toward the whole thing was one of impatience, and the absolute minimum of space was now accorded to it in the British press.

The small group of correspondents in Barcelona,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

during the autumn of 1938, dubbed themselves the Forgotten Men. There was not only the lull in real news, while Franco prepared himself for the final blow, but there was the underlying feeling that even if we did write a good story our editor's comment would not be, "Here's a fine story from good old Salter," but "I suppose we shall have to use some of this stuff about that dreary Spanish War—cut it to two hundred words."

It was a strangely unreal period. Almost anyone on the spot realized that, with Germany and Italy piling up men, material, and planes, the next Franco push must be the last; but this realization did not weaken the Spanish resolution to go on fighting until they dropped, either from starvation or by the more mercifully quick release of bomb or bullet.

The only real story of those four months, from the end of August until Christmas, 1938, was a story which no newspaper cared to print. The second phase of the Black Terror lay over the country like a nightmare. Sickness, lost faith, starvation, and hopeless suffering was the only tale that there was to tell, and who cares for long to listen to such things?

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Food had virtually disappeared since the Franco blockaders had taken to sinking any fishing boats that ventured out. My hotel, the Continental, could only supply its guests with one plate of dubious gruel and half a roll of black bread a day. There was no hot water for baths, as there was no fuel. The linen could not be washed as there was no soap. Soldiers on short leave from the front, covered with lice, and every kind of skin disease, caused by dirt, passed a few nights in the hotel. The sheets that they had used, stained with blood and pus, could not be washed, but would be dipped in some kind of acid, which was supposed to kill the microbes, and then left to dry in the sun, since there was no means of heating an iron. "Clean" linen, therefore, meant the substitution of the sheets that you had used, by crumpled "new" ones, blotched and stained by the previous owners.

There were no taxis, owing to lack of petrol, and the trams and subways ran with increasing rarity as damaged parts, normally imported from England or America, could not be replaced. As a result the few that still ran were so packed as to make it impossible

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to find a place, even on the steps, or hanging on to the sides.

Walking was, therefore, the only means of getting from place to place, and walking when you have not eaten a square meal for months is almost an impossibility.

Looking from a window, down upon the almost traffic-free streets, the most striking thing was the slowness with which everyone moved. On hills the insides of the pavements were lined with gray-faced people, hauling themselves along by their hands on the railings, so as to ease the strain upon their tottering legs. A brisk flare-up of sound usually only meant a short fight between a man or woman and one of the skeleton dogs, that still miraculously survived, for the possession of some desirable scrap of greasy paper or potato peeling. The lucky winner would cram the spoils of victory, still covered with the filth of the gutter, between lips blotched and spotted with skin diseases.

There was, of course, neither tobacco nor alcohol to ease the pangs or to comfort the aching cold of empty stomachs.

Few people actually die of starvation, but a Span-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ish doctor friend of mine estimated that 62,000 people died in Barcelona alone between September 1, 1938, and February 1, 1939, from the indirect cause of hunger. In a condition so weakened from lack of food, a puff of cold wind meant pneumonia, when it should have meant no more than a slight cold. A two-mile walk, which should have been normal exercise, meant heart failure. It was illness that caused 90 per cent of the deaths, but it was lack of food that caused 90 per cent of the illness.

Inability to combat illness was not, however, entirely a question of weakness due to hunger. There were no medicines of any kind to be bought in the chemists shops with which to combat the illnesses.

A world used to civilized conditions cannot, even after the London blitz, or the retreat from Burma, visualize the nightmare terror that is added to everyday life by an entire absence of ordinary drugs. Lack of an ordinary laxative may mean death by peritonitis. A slight toothache may mean the possibility of its removal or repair without a local anesthetic. A slightly cut finger, without an antiseptic, may mean gangrene and amputation. That amputation would be without morphia or ether, and would mean the experiencing

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of unendurable agony. An ordinary shaving rash, without an antiseptic, must be watched for anthrax, or some other hideous, fatal, or disfiguring skin disease.

There is a theory that if a civilian population is called upon to stand such conditions it will revolt. The answer is that you cannot effectively revolt when you are so weak from hunger that you can hardly walk. In Spain, also, there was always the S.I.M., ready to substitute a certain death for one in which there was always, somehow, that faint beloved hope that "something will turn up."

Even under these conditions the Spanish retained some kind of grim humor. Negrin had recently issued a new appeal, "Resist, resist, resist. To resist is to conquer." The next morning, in the center of the Plaza Cataluña, on a pile of bomb rubble, was the corpse of a donkey, its ribs sticking through its scrofulous skin, dead, all too obviously, from starvation. Upon its side was pasted a sign which read, "Lo siento mucho, Senor Negrin, pero no puedo resistir mas," which means, "I'm extremely sorry, Senor Negrin, but I can't resist any more."

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

One result of these conditions was the immense increase in prostitution. It was not a question of a deterioration in morals so much as that tens of thousands of women, many of them refugees from other parts of Spain now conquered by Franco, now found themselves presented with the choice between prostitution or starvation. The pick of these, as regards looks, drifted to the two or three leading hotels.

The Continental Hotel was the acknowledged headquarters of the blockade-running British sea captains, and here a large group of these girls at least found plenty to eat. These captains were mostly beyond the retiring age, and had been tempted back into work again only by the enormous and quick profits that were to be made by the risky business of running Franco's blockade. Their ships, like themselves, had mostly also reached retiring age, and had been put into commission again on the 50-50 gamble of destruction or rich profits; but those that got through brought food, soap, and cigarettes, the only three things that constituted currency in a country where the actual paper money had ceased to have any purchasing power whatever.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

One 72-year-old Scotsman, old enough to know better, finding that he could hire the services of one of the hotel women for two tins of corned beef and a packet of Lucky Strikes, expended an entire crate of corned beef and a carton of five hundred cigarettes in five glorious nights and, on the sixth day, very properly, died of apoplexy.

The dirt, lack of food, discomfort and, above all, the deafening noise attendant upon the merrymaking of the blockade-running captains, decided me to move to the Ritz which, after a period of eclipse as an Anarchsyndicalist Rest Center and Communal Kitchen, had once more become the best hotel in town. It served two hot meals every day of a kind, and had hot water for baths twice a week, for which unspeakable luxury one paid the prewar equivalent of eighteen dollars a day.

Here also was a troupe of "lovelies," some of them quite incredibly beautiful, but all as hard as nails.

One evening a girl entered who was not one of the hotel troupe. I still remember how she looked. Tall and dark, not more than 22, with the slim but voluptuous figure and flawless skin that makes the Spanish

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

women the most exciting in the world. Her dress was obviously a pathetic and not too expert attempt to be "daring" upon a very limited outlay of money. She sat down at a table next to the troupe who, resenting dangerous opposition, made disparaging remarks about amateurs trying to cut in on their preserves, and laughed spitefully among themselves at her cheap dress.

The girl, rather inexpertly, began to smoke a cigarette. As she lit it I noticed that her hand trembled a little and that her eyes were filmed with tears. Juanita was her name and she was, I found, a refugee from Gijon in Asturias, married for two years, and with a year-old daughter. Husband, daughter and mother had all been killed in the same raid. She herself was imprisoned, released, and allowed to escape to Government territory by the local Fascist commander, who had not failed to exact the usual price for his assistance. She had been in Barcelona for three days, and had twenty-five pesetas left in the world.

I have a strong tendency not to believe romantic stories told me by pretty ladies in distress, and it was only in the months that followed that, piece by piece,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

usually by accident, I found that the story that she had told me was true in every detail.

We were together for the next five months, and in that time I learned the fire, tenderness, passion, and loyalty which goes to make up the typical Spanish woman. They are creatures that live only in their senses, stupid if you like by ordinary intellectual standards, their whole world centered around the man that they love, but with a greater instinctive understanding of the art of living fully than can ever be achieved by their Nordic sisters.

Looking back over a lapse of four eventful years Juanita is still a fragrant memory.

As the long golden days of the Spanish autumn drew on into winter it became painfully evident that the next big Fascist offensive would be the last. Past experience suggested that this would be in the spring, probably in March and, believing this, I left for a short eating holiday in Paris just before Christmas—the last Parisian Christmas at peace for very many years to come.

Paris was deep in snow, but still her old gay self, with little or no sense of the wrath to come, and quite

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

unprepared to see in the events in Spain the menacing shadow of her own destruction. In a little house in Saint Cloud, high above the river, the whole glittering city shone each night against the sky beyond the dark patch which I knew to be the Bois de Boulogne. In the formal gardens of the old château near by, where it always seemed likely that one would meet a carriage bright with the silken laughter of the Empress Eugénie and the ladies of her Court, I renewed my acquaintance with my small son and my old dog, and tried to forget that soon I must return.

That came sooner than I had expected. My guess about March was wrong. The plans of the dictators had gone so well in Central Europe, so much better than even they had dared to hope, that they were eager to press on to the next and more important part of their program—Albania for Italy and Poland for Germany. Before that was possible they wanted the Spanish affair liquidated. Franco received orders not to wait for the spring, but to strike now, at once, so that there would be time to withdraw the German and Italian legions, planes, and material back to their own

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

countries before the summer that was to see the launching of the supreme throw.

I had, therefore, only time enough to see in the New Year before, in response to an urgent cable from my editor, I was once more hurrying south to Toulouse, to catch the plane back to Barcelona for a seat for the last act of the tragedy which had already begun.

How near, now, was the actual battle front was brought home to me when, on a day in mid-January, leaving the city at dawn, I was back again at dark, having made a complete tour of the front lines.

On the heights beside Montserrat I stopped the car. In the thin, rare air and pale winter sunshine of Spain it is nearly always possible to see great distances. To the north I could just make out the faint snowy shadows of the Pyrenees and the French frontier. To the south lay Barcelona and the sea while in the west, beyond Cervera, I could watch the shellbursts of Franco's guns along a range of hills. The war was certainly on my doorstep now, and moving daily nearer.

As we approached Cervera, Fascist planes came over in waves such as I had never seen before. As judged by today it was, I suppose, a small affair, but

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

I counted well over 150 in three layers—fighters, incredibly remote, like gnats flicking about in the upper air. There was virtually no resistance. The town wore that bleak, shut-in look which told of a population waiting with the passiveness of despair for the inevitable entry of the enemy.

Beyond the town we had a narrow escape. There was a crossroads upon which a few mounted troops were resting. When we were three hundred yards away a huge metal plane swooped down from five thousand feet and dropped three bombs leaving a heaving, bloody welter of mixed human and horse flesh.

Three miles farther on we met the broken remnants of the retreating army, and had the utmost difficulty in getting free of the tangled, fear-crazed chaos that had destroyed all semblance of discipline.

We turned south toward Tarragona to find the headquarters of General Lister. Quietly, without fuss, he received us. The situation was hopeless and he frankly admitted it, but he betrayed no sign of despair, giving his orders without haste or raising his voice.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Throughout our talk a Fascist reconnaissance plane circled and recircled far overhead.

Hurrying on south, across bridges already mined, and with the sappers and demolition squads standing by to touch off the charge, we could hear the guns pounding away steadily beyond the range of hills that alone separated us from the enemy. Tarragona was almost unrecognizable from the ruthless bombing that it had received, but was fiercely alive with the last frenzied preparations of refugees. Mattresses were piled high on already overladen cars and wagons, everywhere the signs of urgent, desperate haste, for news of the break-through seemed to have traveled even faster than ourselves.

A mile south of Tarragona two planes approached at not more than three hundred feet, one on each side of the road, sweeping it with bursts of machine-gun fire. Bordering the road were huge plane trees, and I slowly circled the bole of one of these, keeping it always between myself and the planes. A second later the bullets came whacking up off the tarmac road and into the thick wood that protected me.

The planes passed on, and a minute later could be

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

heard unloading their bombs upon Tarragona. I returned to the car, which had been hit in several places. Pablo, my chauffeur, was lying, slumped forward, upon the steering wheel, quite dead, with a hole through the top of his head.

Poor Pablo; he had been a pleasant, drunken, grizzled rogue of about 50, who had always stoutly refused to obey my orders to seek shelter during raids, which he considered undignified, preferring to remain in the car, blaspheming horribly in Catalan to keep up his courage. I had to push his body to the side in order to drive and, with it as sole company, turned back to Tarragona, where I handed it over to the Red Cross station, which was just preparing to evacuate the town.

A few hours later I was back again in Barcelona, telephoning to London what remained of my story after the censors had emasculated it out of all resemblance to the original.

After that day there seemed little object in going to the front, since the front was obviously coming to me.

The decision would soon have to be made whether

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

to remain in Barcelona and trust myself to the tender mercies of the Fascists, or whether to flee north to Gerona, whither the Government was already en route, and so on, if necessary, into France.

The precedents for staying were not encouraging. The only British correspondent who had allowed himself to be taken prisoner by Franco was Harold Koestler of the *News Chronicle*, who spent nine months in jail as the result. Seeking guidance I cabled my editor, and received in reply the following illuminating advice, "Leave decision entirely to you but don't take any unnecessary risks."

On the night of the 24th, Constancia de la Mora entered the Press Room and quietly announced that the last cars would be available the following day at noon to transport any correspondents who had not already left. With the particular quality of stillness that was essentially hers she shook hands with us all and went out. The same night she left for Moscow where, to the best of my belief, she still is.

At noon on Wednesday the 25th, I stood outside the Majestic Hotel and watched William Forrest of the *News Chronicle* and O. D. Gallagher of the *Daily*

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Express, loading their luggage into the last car. Gallagher urged me to come with them with a warmth which I could not help feeling was not wholly uninfluenced by the natural desire of the *Daily Express* correspondent not to leave the *Daily Mail* correspondent alone with what, with a little luck, promised to be an exclusive story.

As their car drove away, leaving me standing on the curb, I experienced a nasty sinking feeling in the pit of the stomach. Was I being rather heroic, or merely an outsize in obstinate idiots? To this day I am still uncertain of the answer.

Three weeks later I saw an article in the *World's Press News*, referring to the gallantry of the *Express* correspondent, O. D. Gallagher, "who was the last British correspondent to leave Barcelona." True he had been the last to leave—but might they not have mentioned that at least one had never left at all? It seems that I have not yet mastered the gentle art of publicity.

I still had Williams, now working for the *Exchange Telegraph*, for company, but his position as a resident of Barcelona for nearly twenty years, mar-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

ried to a Spanish woman with good Franco connections, made him a good deal safer. He had, however, decided not to file any further messages, and to remain in his house until the excitement should have subsided, so I was quite alone in attempting to continue working.

After seeing off the last of my confrères I walked up to the censorship office with a message. The building was almost deserted, only one man still remaining at his post in a room ankle-deep in torn paper, which was all that remained of the department's files, destroyed by the staff that had already left.

He looked at me with a rather grim smile, and said, "Why haven't you run away, like all the others?" to which I replied, "For the same reason as you, I expect."

All that day it snowed paper. Thousands upon thousands of propaganda leaflets that had been issued by the Government during the last two and a half years were being torn up and thrown into the street by a population determined not to be found with such incriminating stuff when the inevitable house-to-house search should begin. So much ingenuity in so many

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

millions of words all in order to persuade to a cause that was already lost, "Red" snow—all ending in the gutter!

Planes came over in clouds, flying always lower and lower, as the crews of the various anti-aircraft defense batteries deserted and joined in the flight to the north. There was a big battery on the higher slopes of Tibidabo, the mountain that lies behind the city, which had not fired for forty-eight hours. On that particular afternoon it suddenly fired a single shot that made a direct hit on an enemy plane, which was cruising around obviously without any expectation of danger, bringing it crashing down in flames. I wondered who was the solitary gunner who had stayed on to fire that single shot. Was it for some special motive of revenge or was he just some other fool that could not recognize the right time to run away?

All day the firing from over the brow of the hills to the south had become steadily louder and by night-fall a furious battle was obviously raging in the suburb of Sarriá. The city itself was as silent as death as everyone went secretly about his final preparations for what was to come.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

That night my huge hotel was empty except for Juanita and myself, and there are few things emptier than an empty hotel. Even the servants had fled to their own homes to lend what protection they could to their families, or in order at least to be with them when the end came.

At 4 A.M. we wakened out of an uneasy sleep to the clattering of horses' hoofs. Opening the tall windows we peered cautiously down into the pitch-black street—cautiously as peering down from balconies at such times is to invite a bullet. As our eyes grew accustomed to the dark we could just make out the forms of hundreds upon hundreds of Guardias de Asalto, silently leading their horses out of the town to the north.

Shivering in the January air we drew together, and without a word watched them go. We both knew that these men were the last Government forces in the city. From now on, until Franco entered, it was at the mercy of any crazy Anarchist determined to go out in a last glorious blaze of destruction. There had been rumors that the whole town was mined, and

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

would be blown to hell when the last Government soldier had gone.

For what remained of the night we did not sleep, but lay quietly, hand in hand, staring into the dark, listening to the firing as it grew steadily nearer.

I was out early collecting such scraps of reliable news as were to be found in a city given over to wildest rumors.

At lunch time Comerera, the Communist food dictator of Barcelona for the last six months, entered the hotel and demanded food from the two frightened assistant managers that constituted the sole personnel. Alone in the huge dining room Comerera ate steadily for half an hour, while three men, armed with sub-machine guns, stood at every door. When he had finished all four climbed into his waiting car and left the city. At least he had courage, with Franco's troops not two miles away.

In the early afternoon there was a sudden cessation in the firing, except for the noise of "pacos"—that peculiarly Spanish habit of fifth-columnists firing pistols into the air to induce panic among the defenders. They might have saved their ammunition, since there

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

were no defenders left to panic. As I climbed the hill to the censorship office, with a message describing the last hours of the city, I was the only moving thing to be seen, apart from an emaciated cat which stuck to my heels, mewling plaintively.

The door of the censorship building was locked. By dint of knocking for the concierge I finally got in, to find the place completely deserted. I hunted in drawers and wastepaper baskets for the rubber stamp, with which alone the message would be accepted for transmission by the cable company. It was not there, having obviously been destroyed or else taken with the last person to leave.

Could I persuade the cable company to send my message without the stamp? If not I had wasted my time, and perhaps my liberty, in remaining. I determined to get to the telegraph transmission room, which had moved into the underground railway station in the Plaza Cataluña as a protection against air raids, and try persuasion or bribery. The latter, I suddenly realized, was unlikely to succeed, as the Government money, which was all I possessed, was now completely without value, unless you happened to be

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

lucky enough to possess some of the bills that had been issued before July, 1936, for which people had been paying a heavy premium for some time. However, persuasion might work, as Hugo, the manager of the Cable Company, was a good friend of mine and might stretch a point in order to help me.

I went down the hill at a trot and noticed groups of people gathering on their rooftops, and hanging out carpets from the balconies, which is the age-old Spanish sign of celebration. They were all staring excitedly toward the south, so obviously the Fascist troops could be seen from here, approaching the center of the town.

The last crossroads between me and the cable office was the Calle Cortes, and here I ran slap into the first detachment of Franco's men—tired and bearded Navarese, plodding along toward the Plaza Cataluña, with guns carried at the ready.

Thus at 4.45 P.M. on Thursday, January 26, 1939, the Spanish Civil War came to an end for me on identically the same spot in the Calle Cortes where it had begun for me by the seizure of our car that July morning two and a half years before.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Hastily I sorted out my salutes. A thoughtless one of the clenched fist variety might mean a bullet through the head. Remembering the days when, as a small boy at school I had wished "to leave the room," I raised my arm in that magnificent gesture of the Fascists which will, I fear, forever recall to me a weak bladder rather than a political conviction.

As the troops were marching my way I thought it wiser to march with them, congratulating those nearest me on being the first into the center of the city. They were a friendly, decent set of men, chosen for that as much as anything else no doubt. It was hours later, when the city was securely in the hands of these men, before the Italians were allowed to appear.

As we marched toward the Plaza Cataluña I was suddenly afflicted with doubt as to whether some fanatic Anarchist might open up on us from some balcony. We should have been a sitting target if there had been such an one, but nothing happened and a minute later I was down the steps and in the cable office.

Here I met an absolute refusal to send off my message. It was obviously important that the company, an

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

English one by the way, should do nothing to which the new authorities could object. Just as I was about to give it up a pale little man entered unsteadily, and announced himself the interim censor for the new regime. He had been in hiding in Barcelona all through the war, and was weak in his legs as he had been unable to exercise them for two and a half years beyond pacing up and down his small hiding place under the roof of the house of a friend.

He at once passed my story, and I stood behind the transmitting machine and watched it being tapped out—the first and only authentic eyewitness story of the city's fall told from inside.

When this was safely away I popped my head out into the Plaza Cataluña and watched the scene. By now it was nearly dark, but troops were arriving almost without pause by lorry. Girls had climbed aboard the lorries, and were wasting no time in attempting to repair the drop in the population caused by the war. Bonfires of Government propaganda posters were blazing at half-a-dozen points in the square and then, suddenly, dramatically, all the street lamps went on—the first lights in the Plaza Cataluña for two

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and a half years. Ten minutes later another descriptive piece was following the first over the wires to my paper in London.

At this moment the representatives of the British and American press with Franco arrived in a fleet of luxurious cars. They looked at me askance, but quickly decided that I was a harmless sort of beach-comber, and got down to the more important business of sending off thousands of words descriptive of their ride into the captured city.

One of them turned to me, and said, "Do you know where I can get some beer?" to which I replied, "I last saw beer in Barcelona in August, 1937." "Good God," he said, "then I suppose that I shall have to do with wine." I did not attempt to explain that wine had disappeared at about the same time as beer—together with food, soap, and everything else.

The majority of these new arrivals never realized what it had been like in Government Spain during the last twelve months. If I mentioned certain everyday conditions that had prevailed for over a year they would stare at me and say, "But my dear fellow, if it

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

really was as bad as all that why on earth did you stay?"

Why indeed?—I comforted myself with the thought that perhaps my paper would appreciate it, if I ever got out of Spain without arrest and imprisonment.

Leaving the well-fed heroes of the Franco press in jubilant control I left the cable office and walked moodily back toward my hotel. From every quarter of the city I could hear the single shots of rifle or revolver which told of "executions." The conquerors had not wasted much time in searching out those who had injured them or their relations in the early days of the Red Terror, and in exacting swift vengeance. Apparently there was not so very much difference between the attitude of mind of these educated followers of the Christian deliverer of Spain and the ignorant scum from the gutters of the city that they had defeated.

Well, I thought rather tiredly, I had seen a Red Terror and a Black Terror and now, I suppose, I was witnessing the beginning of the White Terror.

Back in the Ritz all was rapidly changing. Officers

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

in magnificent uniforms were calling gallantly to other supertailored individuals. The unmistakable note of duke calling democratically to mere marquis could be heard on every hand. Marquises, temporarily unbalanced with the heady wine of victory, were to be seen nodding in recognition of persons that had no titles at all.

But best of all were the Italian aviators. I was solemnly presented to a rouged and scented gentleman of about forty, with carefully waved, very long hair, decoratively white at the temples. He, I was told in an awed whisper, was the Ace of Aces, which lost something of its impressiveness by being pronounced in Spanish as the Ass of Asses, which appeared to me to be a singularly appropriate title, as, to his great satisfaction, I hastened to assure him.

This superb being sat in a circle of extremely young admirers, all pilots of not more than twenty, who hung enchanted upon every movement of his leaflike, manicured hands, as he retold tales of ancient gallantry—of the amusing antics of the Abyssinians when he dropped the first gas bomb on one of their camps,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and of the good clean fun that would be had on the morrow, machine-gunning refugees in their flight toward the French frontier.

Later, jealousy coming to the surface under the influence of wine, two of the best-looking of the harem quarreled, drawing knives, but at a word from the Ass of Asses the rebuked one burst into tears and flung out of the room. The other, with adoring eyes, was patted delicately on the cheek by the great man.

It was an instructive evening which I would not have missed for the world, but I have always had a delicate stomach and so I escaped as soon as I safely could. I who cared less than nothing for politics suddenly felt angry at the antics of these painted buffoons, posturing on the graves of real men, and when I am angry it is far better for me to go to bed.

As it was I went under my own steam whereas if I had stayed even a little longer I suspect that I should have had to be carried there on a stretcher.

Chapter IX

MY POSITION during the next forty-eight hours was peculiar. I had made my presence known to the Fascist Press Department, but they were clearly unwilling to take any action until they had received special instructions from Burgos.

The atmosphere of the Press Bureau was utterly different from anything that I had ever seen before. All the censors and conducting officers (for no correspondent on the Franco side was allowed to move unaccompanied) clanked about in uniform and jack boots, occasionally darting suspicious glances at the loathly "Red" who, for some dark and sinister purpose of his own, had allowed himself to be captured. Every time two of these militant beings encountered one another they would pause, give the Fascist salute, and growl, "Arriba Espana! Viva Franco!" The

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

whole feel of the thing resembled nothing so much as a Boy Scout Jamboree without the daily good deed.

I noticed that during these demonstrations their glances would usually flicker toward myself, no doubt in order to see what effect all this zeal was having on my supposedly Bolshevistic leanings. I was soon able to put an end to that. One of them approached me, clicked heels, shot out his arm in the salute, and barked at me:

“Arriba Espana! Viva Franco! What time is it, please?”

I leaped to my feet, gave the salute, and in vibrant tones exclaimed:

“God save the King; Hurrah for Chamberlain, and it’s a quarter to four.”

After that they left me severely alone, but I had not, I fear, added to my popularity.

My paper, realizing that I was in a pretty tight corner, had cabled Burgos at great length on my behalf. As their sympathies had always favored Franco rather than the Government the authorities in Burgos were anxious not to treat me too harshly if my paper still lent me its moral support. Accordingly, on the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

28th, I was sent for by the local press chief, one Colonel Llambari, selected for the job as he had previously been a noted landscape painter, and found him studying a long cable from my editor, which had been forwarded on from headquarters.

His English was poor, and he had to spell out the telegram slowly, word by word. The general tone of it seemed to be having a more or less soothing effect upon him until, suddenly, he struck a well-intentioned but singularly unfortunate phrase. "Salter," read the telegram, "has always reported the war absolutely objectively."

Llambari gazed at me horrified. "Objectively eh? That's bad—that's very bad indeed," he exclaimed in shocked tones.

A repentant Anarchist, his tone implied, was bad but comprehensible, but a man who had been going about the place for months, being wantonly, deliberately objective—that was intolerable, against nature, and all the laws of Fascist decency.

Sadly he read the remainder of the telegram and then said, "Well, for some reason or other your paper seems to think highly of you, and we have no wish to

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

do anything to displease them. Your foreign editor, you know, is a friend of the Duke of Alba, but it is quite clear that you cannot continue to work here.” (The underlying implication was that if I did I might easily go and write something objective again.) “You will leave, under escort, for Burgos on Monday morning at 8 A.M., spend the night at Saragossa, and arrive at your destination the following evening.”

Well, that was that—and I was not sorry. At least I could get to the real heads of the Press Department and put my case to someone who might have some glimmerings of intelligence, and would not regard objectivity as one of the Seven Deadly Sins.

I returned to my hotel, and as I climbed the stairs I heard Juanita’s voice, raised in obvious fury. I dashed up the remaining flight in time to see the greater part of my worldly possessions in an untidy heap, where they had obviously just been thrown, in the passage. Photograph frames had been smashed, and papers fluttered in all directions in utter confusion. The next moment a large Moor shot out of my room, closely followed by a whisky bottle (mercifully empty). He looked badly ruffled and had blood flowing freely

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

from what was obviously a deep bite in one hand. Clearly Juanita had been doing her best, in my absence, to defend my property.

I found her spitting insults like a she-cat at two other Moors, who were trying to carry out some of my suitcases. Finding the atmosphere rather too Latin for me I persuaded Juanita to go downstairs, and very quietly ordered the men to put my things down. They hesitated, and explained that the room was needed immediately for Señor Serrano Suñer, the foreign minister and Franco's brother-in-law. I replied that I did not care if it was wanted for God's brother-in-law, and that if Señor Suñer required my room he should first ask for it or, if he had not had the benefit of an education that suggested such things to him, then he should, at least, have my things removed, in proper order, to some other room.

Somewhat abashed one of the Moors muttered that all the rooms in the hotel were already taken.

"That," I replied, "suggests that Señor Suñer will have to sleep in the street."

I have no idea what would have happened next, for at that moment Suñer entered, accompanied by two

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

officers. They had obviously heard my last observation.

This man Suñer, whom I had never met before, but whom I recognized from his photographs, was, I knew, one of the most dangerous fanatics in Spain, Franco's Evil Genius as well as his brother-in-law, and an Axis man to his finger tips. I had, I had learned by a roundabout route, succeeded in making him very angry some time before by referring to him as the Cuñadillo—a pun on the Spanish word for brother-in-law (cuñado) and the word for Leader (caudillo) which was Franco's title in imitation of Fuehrer or Duce. Spaniards are particularly sensitive to being ridiculed.

We regarded one another for a moment, and each decided instantly that he heartily disliked the other. Perhaps the strain of the last few days had had its effect, but I suddenly felt angry, which with me means that I get both quieter and ruder. Without giving him a chance I started right in with:

"Your servants, in my absence, have broken into my private room. They have forcibly removed my property, damaging it in doing so. Although I under-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

stand that such things are quite common in Spain now, I should not need to remind you that no British subject will submit to being treated in this way without protest both now and later."

I have never seen anyone look so surprised, but he snapped: "Young man, you presumably do not know to whom you are speaking."

I replied: "I know your name and a great deal about you, and permit me to say that never under the Reds, who notoriously had little or no education, was I ever subjected to such a remarkable exhibition of bad manners."

He flushed, and I thought that one of his aides was going to hit me, but at a sign from Suñer he stopped and was told to send for the manager. Meanwhile all three turned their backs upon me, walked to the window, and completely ignored my existence.

When a perspiring manager arrived at the double, Suñer said curtly, "You will find this—" he sought for the word—"person a room, and have his luggage removed there immediately."

"But Excellency," expostulated the manager miserably, "there are no rooms." Suñer turned toward him

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and snapped, "You heard my orders," and turned his back again while the unfortunate manager fled.

I bowed elaborately toward Suñer and said, "Allow me to thank you for your courtesy and consideration. It is quite unnecessary to offer to pay for the damage done to my property," and retired in order while the going was still good.

Ten minutes later I was installed in the room of an infuriated Fascist colonel, who had been ignominiously shot out by Suñer's orders.

I have no doubt that this little exchange of pleasantries did me nothing but harm, but I felt that I had had about enough of the Fascist idea of manners. In short, if other people were going to be bloody-minded, then let's all be bloody-minded together—it's not difficult.

Early on the morning of January 30, my thirty-second birthday, a large car called for me. In it, to my great joy, was Williams, who was not in trouble but who needed to go to Burgos to get his new press card and fix things up generally with the new regime, and had offered to come along, partly in order to lend me his moral support. There was, in addition, a young

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

officer, who was driving, and an unpleasant-looking specimen who, by a few simple tests, we discovered could speak English, and was there for the sole purpose of listening to our conversation. For two days this unfortunate person strained his ears in order to hear a seemingly interminable discussion on dry-fly fishing. His report must have made remarkable reading.

It was slow going out of Barcelona along the twisting mountain road to Sitges, as there was an endless convoy of lorries carrying not only men and material toward the front, now forty miles on the other side of Barcelona, but also food and every other requirement, since the year-long famine through which I had lived had left the country which they were occupying utterly bare of even the simplest necessity.

At the ruins of what had once been Tarragona we turned north through mountains. Here there was ample evidence of the fierceness of the recent fighting. The bark of every tree had been chipped and torn by bullets, and the telegraph lines were trailing forlornly in the mud.

Lerida, which had been actually in the front line

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

for nine months, was little more than a heap of rubble, but we found some food and then pressed on, crossing the Ebro into Saragossa after dark.

For the first time I was now on territory that had never been in any hands but Franco's from the very beginning of the war.

Probably because of Williams' presence I was not treated as a prisoner, and we all dined together in slightly strained amiability.

Early the next morning we were on our way once more, driving across one of those vast plateaus so typical of Spain. To our right the Ebro slid along placidly, bordered by low brown cliffs, while before us opened up seemingly endless vistas of hills, dotted with the soft ocher-tinted roofs of remote villages, clustered round immense stone churches that seemed to have changed not at all since the days when Columbus passed and repassed in his endless searchings for the money to discover a new world.

All this calm immensity, lying under the thin winter sunlight, induced a deeper sense of peace than I had experienced for many months. This was the Spain I remembered, knew, and loved, second only to my

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

own country, and this Spain would not change. Fashions in salutes would come and go, noisy little men in jackboots would, for a time, shout, strut, and swagger, but all this would barely serve to ruffle the surface of the ancient ways of life. Spain, the true Spain, where a year or a century were but different words for the endless passing of time, would soon absorb this present-day nightmare.

Toward nightfall we climbed into the bitter cold of that most English-seeming of Spanish towns, Victoria, and soon after caught our first glimpse of the ancient city of Burgos, the vast cathedral floating like a giant gray cloud over the clustering lights.

It was too late to report to the authorities, but I was told that Merry del Val, chief of the foreign press, would see me at ten the following morning. This was good news as del Val was no fanatic. His father, the Marquis Merry del Val, had been ambassador in London for many years, and he himself had been educated in England.

His manner at once reassured me that I was at least in no danger of arrest. I found him a most charming person, in the middle thirties, and I had the sensation

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

that, whatever his orders might be, he was capable of understanding that it was not necessary to be a Bolshevik in order to justify having worked as a correspondent on the "Red" side.

He paid me one of the greatest compliments that I have ever received, though perhaps it was not intended as such. He said, "There have been just a hundred British and American correspondents on the two sides in Spain during the course of this war. Ninety-odd of them we have listed as being either pro-Red or pro-Franco. Of the three that fall into neither category, you are one."

Once again that accusation of objectivity, but in this case it was mentioned as a peculiarity, and not as a reproach.

It had been decided, I learned, that I was free to remain in Spain, if I wished to do so, but that I could not work as a correspondent until the war should end. As this was now clearly only a matter of weeks the sentence was not a heavy one, and, to emphasize the fact, I was offered a three-day holiday trip to San Sebastian at the national expense, before returning to Barcelona.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Jubilantly I cabled my paper the news, and set off for the famous seaside resort with a light heart. The attitude of my late guards had changed to one of open trust, and the journey over the twisting mountain roads was accomplished in a very different atmosphere from that in which we had left Barcelona three days ago.

San Sebastian I found to be a town designed to attract foreign visitors, and at present lacking in only one respect, namely in foreign visitors. Unlike Irun on the frontier it had escaped heavy fighting, and its many luxury hotels were still open, but desperately hard pressed financially to support their large staffs with nothing but the custom of the few greatly impoverished Spanish visitors.

Nevertheless it was a pleasant interlude, and I made my plans to return to Barcelona without misgivings. A French journalist offered me a lift in his car, which I was glad to accept. He was a kindly soul but had a regrettable passion for oranges, which he ate demonstratively from the Atlantic to the Mediterranean. Ankle-deep in orange peel I made a careful though slightly embittered calculation that whereas the car

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

was doing roughly twenty-five kilometers to the gallon, my companion was not doing more than three kilometers to the orange.

After the stirring events and personal anxieties of the past weeks my present situation induced a not unnatural feeling of flatness and anticlimax. Was I just to wait on in Barcelona until the war was finished, or would my paper reward my efforts by sending me off to some fresh assignment?

The question was answered for me by a laconic cable which awaited me, which read, "As you unable work in Spain for indefinite period feel we must dispense with your services as from today one month." I did not know until much later that one of my confrères, actuated by a desire for my job, had informed my then editor that my continued presence in Franco Spain would have a bad effect upon the extremely cordial relations that existed between my paper and the new Government, owing to my association in their minds with the "Reds."

I felt a little bitter, as it seemed to me that I had served my paper at some risk to myself. Clearly I should have paid attention to my own interests instead

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

of staying on to the bitter end, and, like Gallagher of the *Express*, gained fame as "the last British correspondent to leave Barcelona."

This sudden and unforeseen loss of my job, together with the reaction from strain, produced a deep gloom, but it at least showed me what I must do. I had saved little or no money, and I must find a job if I was going to eat, and my appearance assured me that I needed to eat. I was down to 150 pounds, which, since I was well over six feet tall, meant that I was disagreeably thin. I was sleeping badly and there were all the signs that I was on the verge of a serious breakdown unless I got away at once.

Farewells were painful. I had spent so long in Spain, and shared with these people the uttermost limits of happiness and despair, that I felt that I was leaving my heart behind me. And there was Juanita, who tried so hard to help me, by pretending that she did not mind, until, on that last night of bitter tears and empty promises, we said our good-byes.

On March 14 a huge German Junker plane carried me to Vitoria, and before nightfall I was across the frontier. My heart was too heavy to notice the coun-

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

try as I was whirled north on the Biarritz-Paris Express. I felt sick and ill, and my one attempt to eat had been a disastrous failure.

By the time that I reached the capital I was light-headed with fever. Peering from my taxi window the tall lane of dark houses seemed to writhe and shake above me. An hour later I crawled into bed with a temperature of 104 degrees, periodically delirious, but comfortingly conscious of my dog curled up beside me.

At least she was wholly glad that I was back again.

Epilogue

TWO months in London convinced me that I was wasting my time there. The war in Spain was over and people were anxious to forget it—the more anxious since the more thoughtful of them had a sneaking feeling in their hearts that maybe they ought to have done something about it.

Half-a-dozen editors were prepared to employ me, but only in Spain, and the Fascist ban on my working permit had not been removed. Now, in addition, the Spanish frontier had been shut tight, and even journalists with permission to work in Spain, and without the stigma of having worked with the “Reds,” could not get a visa.

But during those two months the situation had clarified. No visa and permit to work in Spain meant

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

no job. No job meant no eats, and my small savings had, by now, become almost invisible.

Sitting in my rather dismal lodging I counted them up. They totaled eight pounds, four shillings and sixpence. I had exhausted every possible contact in search of work. There was, quite simply, none to be had. Costly cables to Merry del Val had produced nothing but kindly but evasive replies. No doubt the Spanish Government paid for his replies. I was less fortunate. It seemed a completely hopeless outlook.

I gazed out of the grimy window at the pitiless downpour which signified that spring had come to England. I gazed, and in that moment, made my decision. I must get back to Spain somehow, if necessary without visa, without working permit, and almost without money. If I had to be broke, then at least I would be broke in the sun, and not here in front of those who knew me and who would have the pleasure of shaking their heads at the distressing spectacle.

That same day my typewriter again went the way of all flesh in purchasing me a third-class ticket to Hendaye, but as the train rattled along slowly to the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

south my heart was lighter than it had been for many a month.

Arriving at the frontier town I left my single bag at the station and strolled slowly toward the International Bridge across the river that separates France from Spain. The evening was absolutely calm. The smoke from the cigarettes of the two French gendarmes rose slowly into the still warm air. They were unarmed, their tunics unbuttoned, men at their ease. The French side of the frontier was wide open. A hundred yards across the bridge, on the Spanish side, a heavy wooden barrier had been erected. Behind it half-a-dozen Civil Guards kept watch, their rifles slung easily over one shoulder.

Leaning on the end of the bridge I thoughtfully regarded these unusual signs of activity on the Spanish side. Clearly the problem of breaking in was going to be far from easy, but the strictness of the control argued strongly in support of my hunch that a great many interesting things were going on behind these locked and guarded approaches.

As I leaned idly on the bridge a small party approached. They consisted of a plump and middle-aged

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Spanish pair with five children, ranging in age from fifteen to five, loaded down with innumerable shapeless parcels.

The French customs officials barely glanced at their Spanish passports, and waved them across the bridge. I assisted them to collect up the parcels that had been shed in all directions in the Latin excitement of the anticipated formalities. He was a friendly little man, of the shopkeeper class, and overwhelmingly glad to be going back to Spain, from whence he had fled to France early in 1937 in fear of the "Reds." Only yesterday, after countless applications, disappointments, and postponements, he had obtained his visa from the Spanish consulate in Biarritz, and now, "Gracias a Dios," he was on his way home. They set off, chattering like magpies and dropping parcels about every ten yards, and I returned to my comfortable leaning place on the bridge beside the French gendarmerie.

The sun had slipped behind the great headland that hid San Sebastian, and everything on the Spanish side had been abruptly drained of light and color, making

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the towering hills behind that locked frontier seem strangely menacing.

My attention was brought back by the sound of weeping. My little party of Spanish refugees was trailing back across the bridge toward France. Their passports were in order, they were pro-Franco, fugitives from the "Reds," but they had been told that the frontier was shut to everyone except accredited diplomats, and even they, as I heard later, were encountering every kind of deliberate discouragement from entering the country.

Most assuredly something was going on, and I suddenly felt fully alert and interested again as in the early days of the war as I realized how difficult it was going to be for me to find out just what that something might be. From the age of three, locked doors have always had a fatal fascination for me. Thoughtfully I turned back into Hendaye to look for a hotel.

A few discreet inquiries the next day elicited the fact that there was little hope of crossing the frontier at such an obvious point. Reason suggested that I should go farther inland, and twenty-four hours later I was installed in a delightful little village called Sare,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

eight miles from the frontier and some twenty-five from the coast.

I do not quite know what led me to Sare, but in any case it was quite the best place I have ever met for anyone who wanted to make a little money go a long way. It is a typical Basque village, huddled round an ancient stone church, in which the men and women sat severely apart during Mass which was celebrated in the local, quite unintelligible patois, and which included some of the finest singing that I have ever heard. The solitary hotel provided a clean and pleasant room, and in the wooden floored dining room fresh mountain trout was daily served for the equivalent of twelve dollars a week. Excellent Armagnac cost five cents a glass and, as I had sold a few special articles to the *Daily Sketch*, my poverty had suddenly ceased to matter.

I made a flying visit to the huge concentration camps near Perpignan and came away depressed, and somehow ashamed, at the sight of a quarter of a million men, caged like animals behind barbed wire, whose only crime had been in fighting bravely for

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

what they knew then, and we know now, to have been the right.

By the beginning of June my plans for getting into Spain seemed no nearer success than on the day when first I had arrived at Hendaye. The fields that spread from the back door of every house in Sare had taken on the full bloom of summer, and the long soft twilights, with their complement of Armagnac on the pavement of the tree-shaded plaza, succeeded one another in peaceful repetition.

But imperceptibly I had become known and a little trusted by the dozen or so regular patrons, the majority of whom I soon learned were either directly or indirectly associated with the ancient Basque profession of smuggling. Every week three or four of them would disappear and return as secretly as they had gone. During their absence they had been across the forbidden frontier with a load of contraband, sometimes by difficult mountain paths, knowledge of which was a carefully guarded secret handed on from father to son for a dozen generations, more rarely by row-boat along the coast.

By easy stages I led up to the idea of going along

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

with them on one of these trips. I had made no secret of the fact that I was a journalist who was anxious to get into Spain but prevented from doing so by the new restrictions. Being a self-confessed journalist was a sufficient explanation for any apparent insanity, and their only difficulty was that if I were caught it would draw disastrous attention to their activities, seriously affecting their livelihood. I convinced them that if I were unlucky I would say nothing that would implicate them.

Before the final decision I had to be inspected by "the Chief," whose hide-out was on the outskirts of Hendaye. Late one evening, therefore, I found myself in a small wine tavern beside the river that forms the frontier, waiting for my interview. The floor was of trodden earth, while around the walls were a dozen vast wooden casks, cobwebbed and black with age. The single table was stained with wine and tobacco juice; the conversation quiet, almost whispered, and in Basque.

The Chief was a surprisingly young man, and our conversation brief and satisfactory. I repeated my assurances not to implicate any of the gang if I were

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

three whistles walk slowly across the road toward the sea and someone will guide you to the boat."

A moment later I had heard the signal, crossed the road, and was stumbling across a short section of bumpy grass until I saw the boat below me, moored against a partly ruined stone wall. I found a place aft upon one of the bales, and immediately the boat put off. The oars were muffled, and we slid forward without a sound across the harbor and towards the open sea, two men rowing while a third kept a lookout in the bows.

Soon the strong rise and fall of the Atlantic showed that we were clear, and pulling steadily toward a lighthouse that blazed and winked on the end of the great headland that I had seen from the International Bridge on my first arrival in Hendaye, nearly a month ago. That headland was Spain. Slowly we were creeping round that locked and guarded frontier that might be hiding so many things that I wished to know.

The steady swell and the strong air must have lulled me to sleep, for when I next looked up the lighthouse was far behind, and my luminous watch showed 3 A.M. I had been awakened by the different

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

motion of the boat, which was now headed toward the shore, riding the long waves that bore it toward the white markings of the broken water where it swirled round the foot of the black cliffs. The lookout man was tensely alert, waiting for some signal from that wild-looking coast. It came—a single flash from a lantern high above us—and the men at the oars once again urged the boat toward the faint white of the breaking surf.

A few moments later the keel had scraped lightly on stones, and a strong, rough hand came out of the dark, pulled me ashore and up a stiff grass track that left me gasping for breath, but with my feet once again on Spanish soil, despite all the efforts of the vigilant Guardias that lined the frontier.

After the bales of contraband had been cached in some gorse bushes, my invisible companion silently returned and handed me a goatskin of harsh red wine, and said, "My name is Pablo. The others have gone. Drink deep for the way is long and hard." I raised the goatskin and squirted a jet of the raw wine onto the back of my throat in the approved style.

The next two hours were of the quality of a dream.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Mile after mile of rough grassy downland, made doubly difficult since the inequalities of the surface were invisible. How my guide managed it, with a heavy bale on his back, I cannot imagine. Once in a while his hand would stop me and force me down into a squatting position for a moment of complete silence. Then there would come a low whistle out of the dark, often from a great distance, and we would be off again. The mountain must have been picketed by at least a dozen men on the alert for Guardias, but I never saw one of them.

I began to feel pretty weary, but my guide, despite his load, kept on tirelessly at a pace that I found hard to equal. When I felt that dawn could not be far away we at last came to a low, partly ruined cowshed, the floor covered by earth and dung, but empty.

"Sleep," said my guide, whose face I had never seen. "Food will be brought you during the day, and tomorrow night you will be on your way to San Sebastian." With an almost inaudible "buenas noches" he was gone, and I was left in complete blackness.

There seemed nothing else to do but to try to sleep. I had a thick overcoat which I spread on the

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

floor and, exhausted by the long climb, I soon dozed off.

I was standing at the window of my father's study in my grandfather's old house in the Isle of Wight. I put up my hand and touched the place where, as a child, I had scratched my name on the pane with a diamond on the day that I had heard that my mother was dead. It was still there—"Cedric, January, 1920."

Looking out of the window I saw that there was a great storm of wind. The old elms that lined the drive up to the front door were bent and torn before its force. Every branch and leaf was straining wildly, and the long grass in the field opposite was flattened beneath its violence. As I watched, a hand fell softly on my shoulder and a voice spoke that I knew for my sister's:

"Do not look round," said the voice, "but listen closely as I am not permitted to stay long."

It was all so normal that I remember thinking that I should be afraid to talk with the dead, even though I knew that it was one that loved me.

"I wanted to tell you of this greatest of all storms,"

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

went on the voice. "It will change your life as it will change and destroy so many others, but though you will be continually threatened by it, it will not harm you. Only at one moment you will be in great danger, and then your only escape will be to an island. It is not allowed to tell you more, but do not forget—to an island. Even this has been difficult." Then, faintly, "It is not so very long until you will be with me."

I turned and found myself alone. I remember that I could hear the old clock, with its rather wheezy ticking, and outside the howling of the storm. The pewter pots were in their usual place above the fireplace, in which a log fire was burning; and then I heard the unmistakable sound of my father's footsteps coming down the passage. The doorknob turned and the door began to open.

I awoke to a heavy drizzling rain. The roof of the cowshed was leaking in several places, and outside the gray hilltop was visible for a bare one hundred yards. I sat up in the thin light, lit a pipe, and wondered why I had this deplorable tendency for getting myself into the most absurd positions. I might have

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

been in my comfortable four-poster bed in Sare if I had not come on this insane excursion with smugglers into a hostile country. I swore, as often I had sworn before, and was again to swear in Poland, Batavia, and Burma in the coming years, that if I ever got out of this I would change my way of life, and do something nice, conventional, and safe.

Never has a day seemed to pass with a more wearisome slowness. It rained unceasingly and I smoked pipe after pipe, until my mouth felt like a piece of old carpet.

A shepherd brought me some hard-boiled eggs and bread during the morning, and I did my best to arouse interest in a tiresome novel in which the characters seemed to have nothing better to do than to torture themselves by quite unnecessarily refraining from the simple, and indeed admirable, act of copulation. It took them 350 pages to get safely to bed, although I had realized by page twenty that this was all that was needed in order to straighten out all their difficulties and problems. I wondered what the hero would have done if he had found himself on the top of a Spanish mountain, surrounded by armed agents who

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

would get promotion if they found him sitting in a damp cowshed, with no reasonable explanation to offer as to how he had got there.

Infinitely slowly the day came to an end, the rain stopping and the sun appearing through broken clouds in an orgy of wild color. Soon after it was dark, and I was beginning to wonder whether, perhaps, I had been forgotten, someone approached and tapped on the door, and led me quickly away across the soaking fields to the main road. As we went he explained to me the means by which this last, and most difficult, part of my journey was to be accomplished.

There were two Civil Guard posts between me and San Sebastian; the first in open country only a few miles on, and the second in the outskirts of the town itself. A taxi had been hired in San Sebastian to make the journey to Fuentarabia by a man, connected with the gang, who had a house in both towns, and had obtained permission to make the journey in order to transfer his pictures and other valuables from his house on the frontier to that in San Sebastian. The taxi would stop to pick me up on the road, and would stop again at a certain point before a corner which

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

shielded the first guard post. I was there to descend, and would be led by one who awaited my coming, by a path that skirted round the back of a hill, to where the taxi, having been checked through by the Guardias, would pick me up again half a mile beyond.

Everything went according to plan and just short of the town I once more got out, and using a rough plan that had been given me found my own way through back streets to the house where I was expected.

During the next few days I went everywhere, obscure cafés where talk was still free, restaurants, and even to one public meeting of the Falange party, where I listened to the plans whereby Gibraltar would soon be seized from an England beaten to her knees by Germany and Italy. At this same meeting I also heard a fiery speech, made by a reformed Anarcho-syndicalist. I had heard him make several almost identical speeches in Barcelona and Madrid during the preceding two years, but in those days it had been against Germany and Italy that he fulminated. Now for the words Germany and Italy he substituted England, France, and Russia but it was in all essentials

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

the same old speech, full of class hatred and blood and thunder.

I found that this peculiar phenomenon was general. The most violent and irresponsible of the Anarcho-syndicalists, especially those who had been put down by Negrin in May, 1937, had had big repentance scenes and joined the Falange. That they should have sought to have done so was not particularly surprising, as the alternative would probably have been death. What was surprising was that repentance induced by such motives should have been acceptable. It demonstrated once again that which I had experienced personally, namely that a repentant enemy—even a forcibly repentant one—is far more acceptable to the Spanish mentality than was my own fatal tendency to impartiality.

This is perhaps partly religious. The Latin interpretation of the Catholic religion finds the sinner who makes a great deal of noise about his repentance, prior to sinning again, far easier to deal with than he who remains apart, neither sinning nor accepting the established order, and who is cast into outer darkness by both sinner and righteous alike.

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

Facts and figures came in steadily through various channels. The Italians had 120,000 picked troops in the country, who were being steadily evacuated by sea. The Germans had a mere 3,500 men in Spain, but every single one of them was a valuable technician; airmen, artillery experts or transport organizers; more valuable to Franco, in all probability, than all Mussolini's 120,000. There is no room for doubting that these forces alone turned the scales decisively in favor of Franco's victory.

What did they achieve for their own masters besides this victory? Concretely, the invaluable training and experience, means of testing out new weapons and methods of warfare. They gained that which the Japanese gained by their preliminary campaigns in China, and which alone made possible their victories in Malaya and Burma, and which the Russians gained by the wars against Poland and Finland. Indirectly, they achieved the imposition of the Fascist principle and doctrine upon the mentality of yet another European nation.

Will the destruction of Germany and Italy put an

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

end to Fascism in Spain? Not without another revolution and another, though briefer, civil war.

Symptomatic was the presence in the windows of the God Shops—the purveyors of all the paraphernalia of the Catholic Church that are almost as common as grocers or butchers shops all over Spain—of photographs of Hitler and Mussolini flanking representations of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary. Fascism has been skillfully mixed up with religion in Spain, and how deeply ingrained religion is in the masses of the people is revealed by even a slight knowledge of Spanish swearing, where almost every oath is blasphemy and not, as in Anglo-Saxon countries, concerned with sex.

My four days in San Sebastian provided me with all that I needed to know of the new Spain that had been born out of two and a half years of civil war, and which, at the time of writing, is still in existence.

The Falange party—the only party permitted—is the tool of Hitler and Mussolini—deeply and irrevocably opposed to all the concepts for which the United Nations are today fighting. Economic conditions alone have kept Spain out of the war against us,

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

and in the final purging of Europe from the plague of militant Fascism, which alone justifies this war, we shall have to allow the forces of freedom, which we betrayed in 1936-39, once again to reassert themselves by yet another explosion as bitter and as violent as that from which we recoiled before. That misplaced delicacy of sentiment as to its methods then and a fatal shortsightedness, means only that Spain must suffer twice when once should have sufficed.

My only narrow escape during those days was when the police unexpectedly raided a café where I was sitting late one evening, to demand the papers of all those present, when I succeeded in beating an undignified, but nevertheless most necessary retreat, through a back window and over a fifteen-foot wall. There were, however, unmistakable signs that I was tempting providence by staying on any longer. It could only be a question of time until the police got on my track, and to reach Barcelona was a complete impossibility.

As much in order to avoid the serious consequences that menaced those who were sheltering me as for my own safety I consented to give the agreed signal to

TRY - OUT IN SPAIN

my friends, the contrabandistas, by which they would know that I was ready to return to France.

All went smoothly, and less than a week after leaving Hendaye I was once again being rowed round that great headland, with its flashing light, that marked the frontier.

The stars were turning pale as I bade farewell to my companions, and soon after as I climbed the hill, the sun woke the sleeping colors of the old town.

I reached the top and took my last look back. This time it was really good-bye for Spain is closed to me until that day when the slow and righteous anger of sane mankind has put an end to the forces of Evil that today hold a continent in thrall and a world under the menace of organized slavery.

The gallant Spanish episode was over, and with it the first phase of the Second World War—the first phase that might so easily also have been the last. Two months later I was in Warsaw to watch the opening of the second phase.

I took my last look back, and then walked on toward the sun.

* * *

October, 1941—September, 1942 Istanbul, Rangoon, Batavia, Calcutta, Delhi, Baghdad.

Set in Linotype Janson
Format by A. W. Rushmore
Manufactured by The Haddon Craftsmen
Published by HARPER & BROTHERS
New York and London

TRY-OUT IN SPAIN

By

CEDRIC SALTER

There is a mistaken notion afloat that World War II began in 1939. In reality it started in Spain, July 18-19, 1936. Cedric Salter was there during those three harrowing years as special Correspondent, in turn, for the *London Daily Telegraph*, the *News Chronicle* and the *Daily Mail*. Few correspondents have been through more fantastic or more extraordinarily savage experiences. Attached to neither the Loyalist nor the Franco army, he covered several fronts and was continually in hot-water with generals and politicians as well as with his own editors in London.

He was on-the-spot when war broke and was one of the last to leave bomb-wracked Barcelona as Franco marched in. This is his first-hand account of those years. It is the story of the human courage, suffering and misery of the try-out in Spain that preceded the series of similar tragedies all over Europe. It is packed with self-lived adventure, tragedy and occasional humor. The devices Cedric Salter invented to get his news reports out of Spain range from high statecraft to underground plots. He helped two nuns escape in bathing suits to the safety of a destroyer. He watched the bombing of Granollers where there were three thousand casualties among the five thousand inhabitants. He interviewed General Durutti just after he had condemned 800 women to be shot. He saw the final fall of Barcelona. This is also the story of what German and Italian troops did to civilian populations. It is a vivid and horrible forecast of the atrocities that have since swept the continent of Europe—a must among war books, by the man known in Fleet Street as “the most chased about of British correspondents.”

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY



122 958

UNIVERSAL
LIBRARY